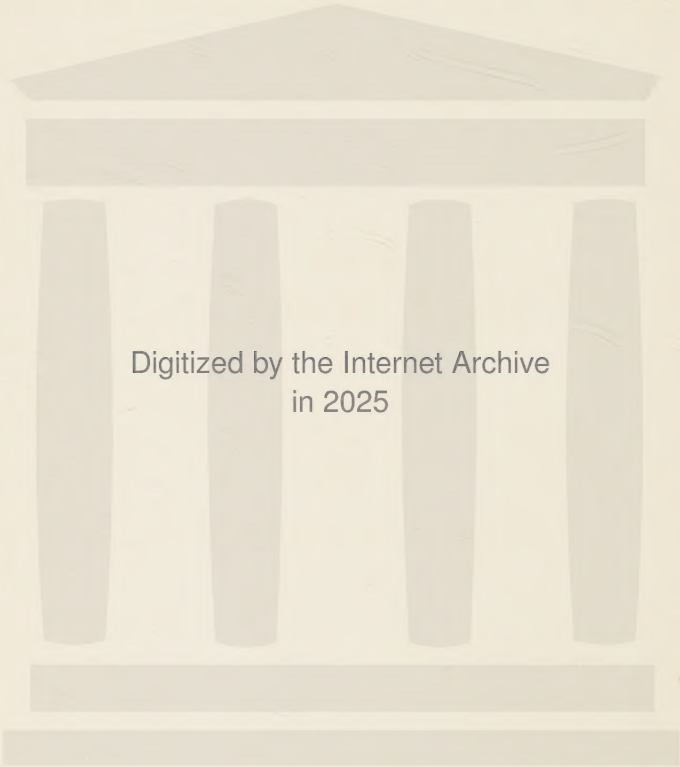
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# SHORT SERMONS

ON

# CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

A PLAIN AND PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE FAITH
IN A SERIES OF BRIEF DISCOURSES FOR THE
ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

BY THE
REV. P. HEHEL, S.J.

II.

THE COMMANDMENTS

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**Nihil Obstat**

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JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY

*Archbishop of New York*

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# Short Sermons on Catholic Doctrine

## THE COMMANDMENTS

### The First Commandment

### The Virtue of Faith

"Thou shalt not have strange gods before me," this prohibition is made the first of the commandments of God. This command does not merely forbid the worship of false gods; indeed, if such were the case Christians could not possibly fail against it because they all believe in the true God. Those, therefore, who interpret the command in this manner fail entirely to understand its meaning. God, by forbidding us to have strange gods before Him, commands us at the same time to duly acknowledge and honor Him as the sole and only true and eternal God.

Hence we are required by this command to believe in one God, to place our hope for salvation in Him alone, and to love Him as He deserves to be loved. The first commandment, therefore, obliges us to believe, to hope, and to love, to have faith, hope and charity, called the divine virtues. God ordains in this first commandment that our entire being should be devoted to Him, and these three acts, believing, hoping and loving, embrace our all, our body and soul, time and eternity. This commandment alone will suffice for our salvation, if we are faithful to it. The three divine virtues must, therefore, claim our first attention, and to-day we will contemplate the virtue of faith by considering the three essentials: What is faith? How do we obtain faith? How can we lose the gift of faith?

*What is faith?* Faith is the firm belief in the truth of everything that God teaches through the Catholic Church. I say, belief in *everything*. Not merely a part, not one or two articles, but everything that the Church proposes for belief. We cannot be half believing and half unbelieving. The Church proposes nothing for our belief but that which God has ordained for belief. And of that

which God has ordained we cannot hold one thing to be more true than another. We cannot, therefore, believe in one thing more firmly than in another without sinning against God. We must believe everything that He has revealed.

This, then, is faith. Now let me ask you, is your faith of this quality?

Christ has said that He is the true Son of God. This we all believe. But Christ has also said that he who would follow Him must learn of Him to be humble and meek of heart, must willingly submit to offenses, must forgive his enemies, he must even do good to those who persecute Him. Do you believe in this, too? Are not the pride and anger that so often masters you, the enmities that may exist between you and your neighbors, contradicting you?

Jesus Christ has said, furthermore, that He is present in the holy Eucharist. We all believe this. But Christ has also said that the mercy shown to the poor is as done unto Him in Person, and yet the poor are turned away from many doors, and, instead of assisting them, many Christians entirely ignore them.

Christ has said, again, that the road that leads to eternal life is narrow, and that to enter heaven we must do violence to ourselves; that the road to hell is broad; and that they who abandon themselves to the pleasures of this world will perish. Do your actions demonstrate your belief in this? These few instances show sufficiently that our belief is unavailing if not manifested in our actions as well as in our professions.

We must also believe firmly. Strong, courageous, unconquerable must be our faith. Nothing in the world should rob us of this faith. Temptations, ridicule, even persecutions—nothing should make us waver, nothing should intimidate us. If it be necessary to profess our faith publicly, then we must profess it fearlessly, even at the cost of our lives. This is the faith that Christ desired when He said: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, I will deny him."

*How do we come into possession of this faith?* First of all by prayer. The power to make our mind submit, and believingly accept that which it does not see or understand, but realizes to be the word of God: this power to believe is infused in us by the Holy Ghost. The faith required by the first commandment, that strong unshaken faith which believes all divine things, for this we must

pray. He who does not pray for the increase of faith remains cold in faith, without strength, without life. He who prays not, is, indeed, in danger of losing the faith. Even the Apostles, though they heard Christ preach and saw His miracles, felt that they had not as yet the immovable, practical faith that believes all divine things firmly, hence their frequent cry: "Lord increase our faith." Therefore, do not neglect prayer. For prayer leads to this faith.

We obtain and increase faith, furthermore, by its diligent practice. For this reason the Church desires that we should frequently make acts of faith. She desires that we affirm our faith as soon as we attain the use of reason, and that the act of faith should be one of the first prayers taught to children. She desires that we make the act of faith as often as we are in danger of death, because then it is most necessary to demonstrate that we are a faithful child of God's Church. She desires that we arouse it when tempted against faith, or against virtue, and whenever we receive a holy Sacrament. Indeed, it is the wish of the Church that our whole day's work, from morn to night, should be but an exercise of our faith.

In this exercise of our faith we are greatly helped by the reading of good books, especially the lives of holy persons. When reading of the martyrs, how heroically and fearlessly they gladly sacrificed their lives rather than deny the faith, who does not feel strenghtened, fortified and encouraged in the holy faith?

Beneficial for the increase of our faith is, furthermore, the zealous hearing of the word of God. It is in these instructions that we are taught what Catholics ought to know. Those who never listen to a sermon, never read a religious book, must necessarily become indifferent to the faith, and this suggests the question:

*How can we lose the faith?* Alas, too many lose it—through sin. Every mortal sin inflicts a wound upon faith. With every mortal sin faith becomes weaker; and a life continued in sin may be punished by God with the entire loss of faith.

There are two vices, especially, which deprive men of their holy faith; they are impurity and avarice.

The unchaste person often sins until the lust of the flesh has sunk its talons in his wasted body so deeply that they cannot be shaken off. This person, then, will not believe that what he does is a grave sin. The suggestions of the evil one, the talk of his companions, and his own passions that refuse to be conquered, cause him to say to himself: These things are not sinful, they are perfectly natural,

how can they be wrong? Behold, he has already lost the faith. He may not admit it, but it is, nevertheless, a fact. For it is an article of faith that impurity is a sin.

The other vice by which one easily loses the faith is avarice, the striving for money and possession by dishonest means. The still, small voice cries out to such a person: Thou doest wrong! He must silence this voice to have peace. Therefore, he makes a code of morals for himself, and finds excuses and reasons until he arrives at the state of believing that his practises are not sinful. And so avarice has robbed him of faith, for it is an article of faith that stealing and cheating are sinful.

Thus may many lose their faith even without doubting any of the articles of the creed.

For this reason, dear brethren, let your faith be as precious to you as your salvation. If you wish to die in your faith, then live now as your faith requires you to live. The observance of the commandments is the touchstone by which each of us may discover whether we have the faith, and the practice of the faith is the safest means to preserve it.

## The Virtue of Hope

To present to God the desires of our hearts and seek from Him consolation and help is very pleasing to Him. We prove thus our faith and our trust in His power and mercy. God wishes this, He even commands that, as we are to believe in Him, we should also place our confidence and our hope in Him. "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me," means also thou shalt neither believe in, nor depend upon, any mercy but the mercy of God. "I am the Lord thy God," He says, "I am the one and only one who can save you." Hope in God, like faith in God, is demanded in the first commandment. Let us consider then, What we should hope from God; How we should hope in God; Why we should hope in God.

*What we should hope from God.* What, then, is it that we should hope from God? Money and wealth? Health and long life, or ability and learning? O, far more than all this. It is heaven with its blessedness, paradise with its glory. It is God himself whom we should hope to possess.

"It is my great consolation," said St. Bernard, "that I have the faith that tells my reason that there is a heaven; but it is far more consoling that I have the hope which tells my heart that a place in this heaven is reserved for me."

What is it, then, that makes some persons hesitate to hope for the kingdom of heaven? Alas, their heart tells them: "Thou art not deserving of it," and, therefore, they have not the courage to hope. Moreover, the evil spirit strives to confound believing souls by whispering to them that they are not worthy. But to such suggestions we should make answer: "I hope to possess the kingdom of heaven, not on account of my merits, but on account of the merits and of the mercy of Jesus Christ."

Someone may have reason to think: "I am a sinner, a great sinner, indeed. How can so unworthy a person as I am go to heaven?" Yes, most certainly, such a person can go to heaven, and there is absolutely no reason why he should not hope. Of course one who *remains* in sin can never enter. But he should seek to be cleansed from sin, and that is what he should hope for. The past cannot be undone. If you have sinned you must hope for forgiveness from

God, whose most beautiful attribute is His mercy. Indeed, even if you have sinned like Cain, and if your heart is steeped in sin, yet you may and must hope for forgiveness. The divine mercy cannot be exhausted. You may, and will, obtain forgiveness for all sins, if you sincerely repent of having committed them, and if you are resolved to reform.

But it is just this reform, you say, that is so hard. It is hard to make firm resolutions to abstain from sin, and harder to keep them. Nevertheless, this is what the sinner must do. He cannot change his disposition and reform without the grace of God. God must assist him. He must give him the strength to keep his resolution. But this grace God gladly gives to everyone who sincerely hopes to obtain it, and who, therefore, prays for it.

What we must hope from God, therefore, is forgiveness of our sins, the grace to live a good life, and life everlasting. He has promised these things to us if we first seek the kingdom of God. Now it must be said here that the kingdom of God cannot be gained by simply hoping for it, if this hoping is not sustained by our actions.

*How, then, must we hope?* Our hope must be steadfast at all times, it must be present under all circumstances and conditions, even when we have fallen. We must never despair of divine assistance. The greater our misery, the less should we abandon hope. God permits us to be beset with adversities, that we may be made conscious of our impotence. When we realize how frail we are, how the world is incapable of helping us, then the Lord will come to the rescue if we seek His assistance.

We must hope, furthermore, only in God. He alone is almighty. Without Him all effort is useless. If we have God's assistance, even the weakest instrument is strong enough to avail us in our need.

We must hope, also, with confidence. We must not waver in our trust if we do not obtain at once what we hope for. We should say in making our act of hope: "I hope, because thou, O Lord, hast promised it. Thou art almighty, therefore thou canst do it. Thou art infinitely good. Thou art faithful, therefore thou wilt keep thy given word."

We must, finally, have a lively hope. Our faith is made lively by good works, and so, too, our hope must have spirit and life. While we hope in the mercy of God, we must also strive on our own part, through works of piety and devotion, to merit the happiness

that we hope for. He who does not try and merit heaven, and yet hopes for it, is foolish and his hope is futile.

Now the last question: *Why should we hope?*

When a ship upon the sea is tossed hither and thither by the waves, and is in great danger of being wrecked upon the shore, all is not lost if there is an anchor on board. This anchor is thrown out, it will protect the ship against being dashed to pieces upon the rocks. This anchor is the hope of the ship. In the same way, the soul when in danger of being wrecked by the furious assaults of the devil and by the temptations of the world, and is on the verge of fatal disaster, such a soul is not yet lost, if it is able to cling to the anchor of hope, hope in the mercy of God. The hope of God's mercy will keep it steadfast and rescue it from eternal damnation.

"Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord. And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture; and it shall not fear when the heat cometh."

Such is Christian hope. If we sincerely hope for the pardon of our sins, for the grace to do good and for the kingdom of heaven, and suit our lives to this hope, all else will be added unto us. We must hope at all times without mistrust, with diligence and effort on our part. We must hope because we are commanded to hope. We must hope, finally, for our own consolation, for our own welfare in time and eternity. Amen.

## The Virtue of Charity

The Apostle St. Paul writes: "And now there remain faith, hope and charity; these three, but the greatest of these is charity." Charity is the root and formation of all the other virtues. What the sun is among the stars, gold among the metals, the diamond among the precious stones, such is charity among all the pious sentiments of the heart. Prudence, justice, fortitude, patience, humility, chastity —all these are valueless without charity. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

And God desires this charity. He even commands it, because the words of the commandment: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me," mean, I am God, I want thy faith, thy confidence, thy affection. As expressed in holy Scripture they mean: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind."

If I would now ask you: "Do you love the Lord your God with your whole heart?" I am sure that each of you, with Peter, would answer promptly: "O Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

There are certain marks by which one can tell whether he or she has really the love of God, and for the benefit of us all I will explain what it means to love God, and the marks by which you can tell who has the love of God.

We like to think often of the friends we love. Many things remind us of them, and gladly we dwell upon the thought of them. And so it is if we love God. The thought of God will accompany those who love Him on all their ways, in joy and in sorrow. The beauties of nature will turn their minds towards the Most High. The happenings in the world, whether good fortune or vicissitude, will remind them that God alone rules and orders all things. To love God and to have Him in constant remembrance are two things so inseparable that St. Bernard calls charity the eye that unceasingly

gazes upon God. Thus do the God-loving walk before God's countenance. If you wish, then, to know whether you love God, ask yourselves how often you think of Him. For it is certain that he who loves God thinks frequently of Him; and he who thinks not often of Him, loves Him not.

Again, he who loves God has zeal for God's honor and glory. We are not indifferent to the honor of our friends. On the other hand, we care little how they fare who have not our affection. He who truly loves God cannot be indifferent when God's commands are despised, when His name is misused, His commandments neglected. He who loves God has zeal for God's honor and glory. He will not listen unmoved when God is blasphemed, when religion is ridiculed.

This is another test of your love of God. Are you solicitous about the honor of God? Do you manifest your disapproval when it is assailed? Do you avoid the company of those who revile religion and things divine?

The love of God is, furthermore, manifested in our love of our brethren, because all men are the children of God, and, therefore, the welfare of our fellow men should be dear to us, as it is to God.

Examine your heart in this matter, too, because it is certain and true that he who does not love his fellow men has not divine charity.

Those who love God truly will desire His presence, His company. They know that God is everywhere, yet, as they cannot see Him here in this world, they yearn to behold Him in reality, to enjoy Him perfectly. They sigh with the Royal Prophet: "My soul thirsts for God, the living water. When shall I go there where I can behold His face? When will that blessed hour sound that calls me out of this life? O when, finally, shall I be conducted to the eternal wedding banquet in the celestial city, and behold Him face to face whom heretofore I have had the grace only to enjoy under poor forms?"

How does your love of God prove itself under this touchstone? It means that those who truly love God are zealous in prayer, zealous in attending divine services, zealous in receiving the Sacraments. They flee and abhor sin because it deprives them of their friendship of God.

Search your hearts, dear brethren, and see if you discover these marks of the love of God. If they are not present, you have not the true love of God, without which no one can gain eternal salvation. Amen.

## The Veneration of Saints

To believe in God, to hope in God, to love God—this is what is ordered for us by the first commandment. But the question arises: Are we not to hope in any one else, not love any one else, not venerate any one else, not even the saints in heaven? Do we commit a sin against this commandment by invoking and venerating the saints in heaven?

There are, to this day, those who accuse Catholics of being idolaters, because we venerate the saints; they accuse us of worshiping the saints in the same way as we worship the Lord. This, however, as every well-instructed Catholic knows, is not the doctrine nor the practise of the Church. The Church teaches that it is lawful, befitting and profitable to venerate the saints, but she also teaches that there is a great difference between the worship offered to God and the veneration given to the saints.

The veneration of the saints is not simply a notion that in the course of time was incorporated into our religion. It is an ancient devotion, founded in holy Scripture, confirmed by the blood of martyrs and attested by the teaching of the fathers. It has been practised since the very beginning of the Church. The veneration of saints is part of our creed, and it is inseparable from the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. This article of faith tells us that the saints received into heaven have not ceased to be united to us, they are still our brethren in Christ, as are our fellow men still living on earth. Is it worthy of censure then, or is it idolatrous to honor our brother in Christ, to ask one another's help, to have recourse to those who we know can and will gladly help us? It cannot be anything else but right and proper, and in our veneration of the saints we do nothing more than that.

In honoring the saints we really do that only which God himself does. Christ the Lord testified: "If any man minister to Me, him will my Father honor" (John xii, 26). God, therefore, knows and loves the saints as His faithful children. Christ loves them as His brethren. The Holy Ghost recognizes in them the precious temples that He during their lives adorned with His gifts. Is it not befitting then, that we honor those who are honored by God himself?

We invoke the saints that they may intercede for us with God, and

that through their merits they may obtain for us the special graces which we have not merited for ourselves. To God their prayers are greatly more acceptable than ours; they carry our petitions to the very throne of God, just as the Angel Raphael offered up to the Lord the prayer of the pious Tobias; we implore them to ask God in our stead; to be our advocates and to plead at the throne of the Almighty in our behalf. We honor and invoke the saints, also, to make profession of our belief in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, and to manifest our desire to participate in their merits.

While the veneration of saints is obviously most proper, it is also holy and part of the worship of God, for God himself is thereby honored. We cannot admire and honor the saints for their great virtues, their heroism, their steadfastness, without at the same time extolling the power and grace of God who worked these great things in the saints, who made out of frail vessels those glorious instruments for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

The remembrance of the saints impels us, again, to imitate their deeds and to become like unto them—in life and in death. By venerating them we learn how to pass the brief days of our earthly pilgrimage in pleasing God, and how to merit the beautiful crown that adorns the saints. We learn to be pious, righteous, patient, meek, humble; in brief, we learn the art of being holy. By leading good lives we obtain extraordinary graces from God, and secure the patronage of the saints and their powerful assistance.

The fact that the invocation of the saints is well pleasing to God, and profitable to those who practise it, is attested by many instances in the Old Testament as well as in the New. When Patriarch Jacob was blessing the children of Joseph, he invoked his guardian angel and said: "The angel that delivereth me from all evils, bless these boys" (Gen. xlviii, 16). When God threatened to punish those who had reviled Job, He made known to them that they might avert punishment by getting Job to pray for them and He would hear his prayer and spare them (Job xlii, 7).

There is a vast difference between the worship of God and the veneration of the saints. We acknowledge only one God. We believe only in one God, hope only in one God, love only one God above all angels and saints; that is to say, we *adore* only one God. We do not adore the saints, but venerate them, as His friends and faithful servants, by paying them a homage very different from that which we offer God. We place our hope in God, and believe that

from Him alone, who is the Father of all light, the source of all good, all good can proceed. We invoke the saints that they may intercede for us, and through their prayers obtain for us the graces that are unobtainable by our own merits. We know perfectly well that the saints of their own power are incapable of helping us; that they have power only through the grace and omnipotence of God; that, therefore, they are neither godly nor like God, but only the servants and friends of God, who graciously grants what they ask for us.

The Church desires that the exterior veneration should manifest the fact that the homage paid to God is superior to that offered to the saints.

When a church or an altar is named in honor of a saint, the Church itself or the altar is dedicated not to the saint, but solely to God alone. And although we say, for instance, the Church of St. Sebastian, of St. John, or Our Lady's Altar, the Altar of St. Aloysius, this does not mean that these houses of God, or altars, are erected and dedicated to the saints, but to God in memory of these saints and in remembrance of their work for God. .

The Protestants claim that by making the saints our mediators we deny that Christ is the mediator between God and man, and they say that because Christ is the mediator it is unnecessary, even an offense, to invoke other mediators.

If it were true that the saints must not be invoked because Christ is the only mediator, then it would not be lawful for any of us to pray for one another. Holy Writ plainly directs: "Pray for one another, that you may be saved" (James v, 16). Of course, Christ is the mediator of our salvation. He has reconciled us with God through His own power, through His own merits, through making complete satisfaction for all our sins. Christ is also our intercessor with God, not as the saints intercede by prayers and petitions, but through His own merits. For this reason we say in our prayers not "Christ pray for us," but "Christ have mercy on us." On the contrary, when we invoke a saint, we do not say "have mercy upon us," but "pray for us." We, therefore, profess clearly and plainly that we do not adore nor invoke the saints like God, who can help of his own power, but that we ask them to pray for us, that through their intercession we may be granted by God that which we cannot obtain of our own accord.

Thus we recognize in the saints the miraculous hand of the Lord,

and we praise the Lord in His saints. For it is none other that works miracles but God who calms wind and wave with a word. In Him alone do we believe, Him alone do we adore, and in venerating the saints we give testimony to our belief that they owe to God all that they are, that they were saved, as we expect to be saved, by faith, hope and charity. Amen.

## What the First Commandment Prohibits

### Superstition. Fortune-telling

We have in previous instructions considered the faith commanded in the first commandment, now let us ask how we may sin against the faith. We may sin against the faith by superstition and fortune-telling.

Superstition amounts to false faith. It is called false faith because either God is worshiped in a manner not befitting, or because a person or thing is given homage which is due only to God.

If we ascribe supernatural or secret power to a means for attaining our wish that has this power neither of itself nor through God, nor through the disposition of the Church, then we practise superstition. There are many kinds of foolish superstition. Our age deifies the light of reason and many of our enlightened people are wont to regard with pity those who still have the faith. But you only have to glance at the advertisements of fortune-tellers and astrologers to realize that while these people refuse to believe in God, they do believe in the stupid stuff handed out by clever fakers.

Then there is the improper use of holy articles. Some persons, in order to find concealed treasure, or in order to win at play and so forth, make use of blessed things. He who makes use of such articles for absurd ends renders himself guilty of superstition and of sin. For they have no such power either of themselves nor through the blessing of the Church. It is also superstition and sin to ascribe to the possession of certain prayers infallible success in some earthly undertaking; for instance, to believe that carrying a certain prayer in your pocket will protect against sudden death, or obtain business prosperity.

Superstition is, of course, also the belief in fortune-telling and in good or evil signs.

Persons who believe that the future can be read from signs, sin against the first commandment. The future is known only to God, therefore, our final destiny, the day and manner of our death, the events of our lives, are known only to Him. Therefore, he who would prophecy the future with certainty from natural signs, claims divine omniscience and sins grievously against God.

The same applies to dreams and to their interpretation. Dreams are quite natural. Our soul is always active, and while the body reposes it frequently occupies itself with what we have done in our waking hours, what we have thought, or intended to do. These images, which at night pass before the eye of the imagination, are called dreams. The temperament of an individual has a great influence upon his dreams. A sanguine temperament is wont to dream of cheerful things; the melancholy, of graves, funerals and persecutions.

While it has happened that God sent inspiration to His servants in their dreams, this was done in a manner that left no room for doubt. We are, therefore, safe in ascribing our dreams to natural causes, and it is idle and wrong to seek an interpretation of the obscure, and often foolish, things of which we dream.

The evil spirit endeavors to confuse us by many means, and the many forms of superstition are a welcome help to him to rob us of our faith, or at least weaken it. We shall never be in danger of superstition if we obediently follow the teachings of the Church and accept implicitly her explanations and warnings. A zealous practise of our faith will strengthen it against all errors. Amen.

## Images and Relics of the Saints

We sometimes hear from non-Catholics the objection: Is not the veneration of the Blessed Virgin and of other saints, and the Catholic custom of honoring them in their images and statues, contrary to the first commandment? Does not God command us expressly, "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me and thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image?"

To this objection we answer that the veneration of the saints by means of images and relics is by no means an idolatrous devotion; it is, on the contrary, very pleasing to God and very profitable to ourselves. It is good and profitable to venerate God and the saints even through images. God did forbid the Jews to make images, and to use them at their worship, for a very good reason. The Jews lived in a country surrounded on all sides by pagans. These latter made for themselves images, and *worshiped* them as their gods. Thus surrounded by idol-worshipers, the Jews were in great danger of being led into the vice of idol-worship, had not God forbidden them entirely the use of images. For this reason He said, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, to worship it."

We Catholics do not make images to worship them. We revere in them the memory of dear and devoted friends, but we do not worship them. That this is pleasing to God is taught by the Church; for instance by the Council of Trent, which proclaims that it is good to keep in the home, and particularly in churches, images representing Christ, also the Blessed Virgin and other saints, and that we should hold them in becoming reverence. Indeed we kneel before these images; we uncover and incline the head; but in so doing we are not so foolish as to show this honor to the wood, or the stone, or the painting, but we pay this homage to the saint represented by the image. When we kneel down before a crucifix, our intention is far from kneeling down to the wood of which the crucifix is carved, we place ourselves in spirit beneath the crucifix of Jesus Christ which it represents, we prostrate ourselves before Christ alone and worship Him. When we lift up our hands before an image of the Mother of God, or some other saint, and fervently ask a favor, we are conscious of the simple fact that we cannot beg

this favor from the lifeless image, but we ask the saint, whom the image merely recalls to us. And if the favor is granted, we are very far from believing that this image has any power of itself for which we should hold it in veneration, or that we had placed our trust in this image. Such would indeed be rank idolatry, just as the heathen placed their hopes in idols. What we do believe, is that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, or the saint, whom the image represents, we hope that God will hear us and grant us the desired grace, and that is a most proper and lawful belief.

Why do we make such images? Because they are most useful for all devout persons. The images of saints are for many a most instructive book of reading and meditation, and for all a useful book of prayer.

In these images we read the holy mysteries of our religion, the institution of the holy Sacraments, the Passion and life of Jesus Christ, the miraculous doings of the saints. For this reason we place images and statues in our churches so that people may at least read upon the walls that what they will not, or cannot, read in books. For instance, if we see Christ portrayed with a lamb upon His shoulders, and the shepherd's staff in His hand, do we not read in this picture the beautiful gospel of the Good Shepherd? And do we not read with great profit the entire story of our Lord's Passion by beholding the stations of the Cross? A saint with a lily, or a saint with a palm in his hand, brings to our mind at once the fact that this saint in his or her lifetime was sanctified by the virtue of chastity, or that the saint was a martyr for his faith. Truly an instructive reading-book are these holy images. They are furthermore an excellent prayer-book. We cannot pray without having an image before our souls. This you all must surely have experienced. When we pray to God or a saint we immediately try to picture to ourselves, in spirit, God or the saint. And the more realistic the picture the easier it is for us to lift up our minds, the more ardent our prayers. Now, is it not much easier for us and more profitable and meritorious to gaze upon a beautiful picture of God, or of the saints, than form the picture in our mind's eye? This is the reason why it is so easy for us to pray devoutly before a good holy picture. Our hearts are more easily touched and edified if we behold, for instance, the image of innocent Aloysius, of just Joseph, of the sorrowful Mother of God, of Jesus dying upon the Cross. For this reason the saints read so gladly in the book of the

crucifix and of pictures of the Mother of God. It must, therefore, be pleasing to God, and most profitable to ourselves, to perform our devotion before holy images and statues.

It is even more befitting to venerate holy relics. It is right and profitable to venerate the saints in their relics. We call a relic that which remains of holy persons for our veneration, either of their body, of a garment that a saint wore, or of the instruments by which he or she suffered martyrdom, or that may have been used by them to do penance. The bodies of saints were once living members of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, who made us of them in many good works. At the end of the world, at the resurrection, their bodies will be transfigured and taken up into heaven in brilliant light where, in union with their pure souls, they will enjoy everlasting glory. On account of this high destiny they have always been held by the Church in highest honor, and the Church has bidden us to esteem and to honor the remains of the saints. God, who gave life to a dead man whose corpse accidently touched the bones of Eliseus (IV. Kings xiii, 21); who granted miraculous power even to the shadow of St. Peter and to the handkerchief of St. Paul, has at all times, even to this day, granted special graces to the faithful who invoked with confidence the intercession of saints whose relics they venerated.

Now a last question: Which saints are to be venerated in particular.

The greatest honor after God, without doubt, belongs to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is the Mother of God, the Queen of the Saints; by reason of her graces, of her merits and of her sanctity, she towers far above everything created in heaven and upon earth.

After her the foster father of Jesus Christ, St. Joseph, has the first claim to our veneration, and then our Guardian Angel. We owe, indeed, great veneration and gratitude to our Guardian Angel. He serves us day and night, guides and leads us, protects and preserves us; fights the evil spirits for us and prays for us without ceasing before the throne of God.

It is fitting also that we pay special honor to the saint whose name we receive in baptism. This veneration finds its best expression by our endeavor to imitate this saint in his or her virtues. There are, furthermore, special patron saints for various states of life, and saints invoked in certain afflictions. But, of course, all saints without exception have a claim upon our esteem and veneration.

Let us, therefore, be zealous in venerating the saints of God, and through their intercession request of God that which is most needful and most conducive for the welfare of our soul and body. And we should, according to the custom of the Catholic Church, conclude our prayer with the words, "Grant us this, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," to manifest thereby that we adore only God, that we place our whole trust in the Divine Power and the merits of Jesus Christ, and that we invoke and venerate the saints only as our mediators with God. Amen.

## Sins Against the Love of God

The first commandment ordains that we should love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with our whole strength. He who loves other things equally with God, or above God, does not love God as he should, and he does not observe the first commandment. Of course we must love our neighbor, but not more than God, not, in fact, without God, but on account of God. Hence they sin against the first commandment who show more honor to the saints than to God. Some pious people venerate particular saints so highly that they seem to forget about God. They appear to have a greater confidence in the saints than in God himself. Such improper devotion is displeasing even to the saints, who are chanting before the throne of God, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory."

They also sin against this commandment who love their parents or children, their brother, sisters or other relatives, husband or wife, or other human beings, more fervently than God, who offend God by sin rather than offend the creature they love. This is a blind and senseless love, a love without faith, without reason, contrary to God and His commandment. Of this love God says, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." Such a one is not worthy to behold Jesus in His eternal glory.

They, too, sin against this commandment who, in fulfilling their obligations, seek to please men rather than God. This was Adam's sin in Paradise, who sought to please his mate by partaking of the forbidden fruit. In our day there are only too many who omit the good and do the evil, in order to be in favor with men and not to incur their displeasure. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other" (Matt. vi, 24). "If I did yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. i, 10). Heed this well, you parents, who allow your children free rein. Mark this well, you who, in order to gain favor, connive at wrongdoing. You are trying to serve two masters, and will experience the fate which David prophesied. "God has scattered the bones of those who sought to please men; they have been put to shame, for the Lord has cast them off."

They also sin against divine charity who love money and possessions more than God. It is of these that the Lord says, "Their hearts are in their purses," because they are so taken up with the constant striving for wealth that they forget utterly their God and their soul. This unbridled solicitude for things temporal, this greed for gold, buries them to such an extent in their affairs that all sense for that which is heavenly dies within them. Verily their god is money, and their act of love is somewhat like this: O, my money, I love thee above all things because thou art the supreme good, and worthy of all love. Not without reason does St. Paul the Apostle remark about those who are possessed of this love of money, "For they who would become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (I. Tim. vi, 9). Yes, the greed of money exercises so great a power over some persons that they hesitate at no deed however shameful; no vice, however hideous.

They also sin against divine charity, who are addicted to gluttony and drunkenness, who know no greater bliss than feasting and drinking. They do not love God, "their god," says the Apostle, "is their belly."

Neither do they love God who pursue sensuality, and move in an atmosphere of sin. It is pitiable to behold young and old almost anxious to rival one another in the pursuit of pleasure which have their attraction only from license and lust.

Dear brethren, God loves us with an infinite love. He loves us so much that He sent His divine Son to redeem us from perdition. Everything we are and possess is ours only through the love of God. What base ingratitude, what brutal indifference, it is therefore, not to return this magnificent love. It seems almost inconceivable that people could receive so many benefits without even giving a thought to their benefactor. God, who loves us, commands that we love Him, and only they will stand at the right-hand side of the eternal Judge, who, through their love of God, and through their living in accordance with it, have proven themselves to be the children of God. Amen.

## Sins Against the Virtue of Hope

Verily hope is the soul of action. What sower would sow his seed if he were never to hope for the harvest? What ship would sail the seas if it were not for the hope of gain? What man would work but in the hope of sustenance? And, dear brethren, would we labor in the vineyard of our soul, putting in order this often ungrateful soil, if we were not induced by the hope of gaining imperishable benefits? It is hope that animates every action and without hope there will be stagnation. Our hope, however, should resemble that of the sower. He knows he cannot hope for a harvest without having sown the seed. He realizes, further, that much of his sowing may apparently be fruitless, nevertheless he is not discouraged. Is our hope of that quality? Alas, many of us are wavering in hope, we are not steadfast; while others again are presumptuous, they desire to reap where they do not sow.

There are persons who, although they see that God provides for the birds of the air and the fish of the waters, yet are distrustful of divine Providence. They are so solicitous for that which is temporal that they forget divine Providence. They ignore the fact that everything proceeds from God, and that all our labor is in vain if the hand of God blesses it not. They, therefore, who on account of temporal gain, neglect their duties to God and to His Church, who are forever scheming how they can further their temporal welfare, and forget all about eternity, evidently believe not in Christ's promise, "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee; He shall not suffer the just to waver forever" (Ps. liv, 23).

There are others, again, who imagine that they cannot lead a devout life, as others do or have done. They are continually exhorted to conversion by their conscience, but the sight of their many sins, of their firmly implanted passions and evil associations, discourages them and they cry out, "It is of no use. I have not the strength to reform. It is my fate." They give up all hope of saving their souls and deny that divine Mercy is greater than their many sins.

This is, however, one of the gravest sins. He who is so distrustful of God that he despairs of the forgiveness of his sins, does not believe that God is as merciful as He is just; he regards God only as the stern Judge, and not also as a loving Father whose most beautiful attribute is to have mercy upon all. He denies also divine Omnipotence, because he does not consider God powerful enough to accomplish the sinner's conversion. This is equivalent to saying, the sinner can do greater things than God can; he can commit such enormous sins that God cannot wipe them out.

He denies, also, God's infinite charity and the infinite merits of the Precious Blood, that our Lord shed for love of sinners to purify them from guilt.

Those that despair deny, finally, that God is true and faithful, God has said, "I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live"; and, "if a heart were red as scarlet through sin, yet would I wash it white as snow"; but the despairing pay no heed to this solemn assurance. For this reason they that abandon hope are guilty of grave sin.

Now there is the other class of persons who hope presumptuously. Some depend so largely upon their intellect, upon mental or corporal strength, upon power and position, that it does not occur to them to invoke God's blessing upon their labors. They do not take counsel with God about their affairs, they do not ask Divine assistance that they may not be led astray by human interests, and do things either opposed to justice, or tending to their own detriment. Holy Writ says: "Who so trusts in himself is a fool."

There are persons who sin by presumption in receiving the Sacraments without proper preparation, and others who think they can keep good resolutions without avoiding the near occasions of sin.

By false hope and presumption sin also those who without fear heap sin upon sin, and hope to be saved on account of the mercy of God. Such hope in the mercy of God is a most sinful one, because it mocks the justice of God.

People are guilty of this sin in various ways. Many say to themselves: I am not a bad Christian. I have the faith; I hope in God, and on account of the merits of Jesus Christ God will not let me perish. They forget that it is written, "Labor the more, that by good works you make sure of your vocation and election."

Others say to themselves: They preach to us about God's justice. But God is also merciful and He knows that we are frail and inclined

to sin. These forget that it is written, "Be not deceived, sinners will not enter into the kingdom of God."

Others say: Heaven was created for angels and men, many have entered there who were no better than I. They are unmindful of the words of God, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and only the violent bear it away."

Others again, and there are many of them, think: it is easy for me to obtain the forgiveness of my sins, even if I cannot confess them: I have only to make an act of perfect contrition for my sins, which I can do even in my last moments. Do they really think that after many years in iniquity they will be able to awaken sincere sorrow for sin? It will more likely be despair than hope that will attend their last moments.

You see, then, dear brethren, how we may sin against the first commandment by either hoping too much or too little. He who despairs of God's mercy, hopes too little, he denies God's mercy; and he who sins by presuming upon God's mercy, denies God's justice. If we would be saved, we must hope in the grace and compassion of God if we have been so unfortunate as to have sinned. But after pardon has been granted, we must not show scorn of the grace and mercy of God by seeking again the path of sin. May God graciously preserve us all against trifling with His mercy. Amen.

## Vows

We have contemplated how the name of God must be glorified. Now there is another manner of giving honor to the holy Name, namely by vows, that is by promising to do a certain thing for the honor of God.

Let us inquire therefore, what is a vow, and how it must be fulfilled.

St. Thomas writes about vows in this manner: "The vow is a voluntary promise made to God to do or to omit something that is good of itself, and possible, and if done, or omitted, of salutary effect."

This explanation is important and every word of it has its special meaning.

A vow is called "a promise made to God." Not to a saint therefore, not even to the Mother of God, is this kind of sacred vow made. This vow is an act of adoration. There are also vows made with the intention of venerating a saint, of imitating him or her in some virtue, of making a promise to the saint for the glory of God. This of course is allowable. But such vows have not the importance or the binding force that are essentials of the vows made to God, to do or to omit something. A vow is called a promise, by virtue of which we engage ourselves before God to do, or to omit, a certain thing. There is a vast difference between a mere resolution and a vow. He who resolves to do something, has a firm intention of doing or omitting a certain thing. For instance, you may intend to make a pilgrimage and you say to yourself: it is my intention to make this pilgrimage. This resolution does not put upon you the obligation to make this pilgrimage. You do not engage yourself to it under pain of sin. On the other hand, if you give your solemn promise to God, and have the will to pledge yourself to God *under pain of sin,* to do that which you promised, then you have made a vow the keeping of which becomes a duty and an obligation. Hence it is evident that resolutions, such as one makes in Confession, are not vows, and the breaking is not sinful, although of course the action by which they are broken may be sinful. A vow made to God, on the contrary, can never be broken without sin, because it is a serious promise made under pain of sin. This is the

difference between a vow and a resolution. You should be thoroughly impressed with this difference, in order to make plain to yourselves whether in some matter you have made a vow or only a resolution. When there was not the will to bind yourself under sin, there was no vow, but an intention, a resolution.

A vow is a *voluntary* promise made to God; *i. e.*, a promise completely in our power to make or not to make; made therefore alone for the love of God, without compulsion, without fear, without confusion of the mind, with the full use of reason and made deliberately. Consequently, a promise that has been forced is no vow.

A vow is, furthermore, a promise to do or omit something that is of itself good and possible.

The thing promised must therefore be good. A promise to do something wicked is of course sinful and never a vow. For instance: A person makes a vow to rob or murder his neighbor. Such a vow is not only void but exceedingly sinful.

To the one making the vow, its fulfillment must be possible. Matters impossible of accomplishment cannot be made the object of a vow: for instance, if someone should vow to build a church never expecting to have the means to do so. A promise of this kind is a mockery and trifling with God.

If you wish to make a vow, never let it be from fear or compulsion, nor from revenge or anger, never do so in a condition of sorrow or depression, but do so with deliberation, with the free use of reason, with free will, and solely for the love of God.

Do not make a vow for trifling reasons, do not make a habit of vowing. No one should make a vow without consulting his confessor. This point is recommended for the especial consideration of the devout female sex, for they are often wont to act on impulse in making vows.

We come now to the question: how must a vow be fulfilled? We must of course fulfil, if possible, every promise seriously made, even though made to man only. Our word should be sacred to us, and he who does not keep his word is rightfully called a faithless person. In the vow, we make a promise to God, our Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth. We give Him our solemn word with a sincere heart. If we would be faithful towards God, then we must keep our word and fulfil our promise, and this as soon as possible, and as fully as possible.

"If thou hast vowed anything to God," says the Holy Spirit,

"defer not to pay it; for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him" (Eccl. v, 3). God prefers that man should not make a vow rather than, having done so, to break it.

You have heard now what a vow is, how it should be made and how to fulfil it. You can judge whether you have made a true vow, or only a promise, and whether you have dutifully kept your vow. I have also warned you to be careful in making vows. If in doubt about vows you may have made, or may wish to make, there is little need of brooding over the matter. You have an easy means at your disposal to have all your questions answered and your doubts dispelled, and that means is the confessional. Any confessor will be glad to advise you if you will fully state all the facts connected with the matter. But I warn you again that a sacred vow made to God is a very serious matter, and should not be lightly made, nor broken after it has been made. Amen.

## The Significance and Use of the Divine Name

In order to glorify and praise God as is His due, our heart and mouth must be in accord. We are admonished by the Apostle Paul that: "with the heart, we believe unto justice: but, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x, 10). Of him who believes in God at heart, but will not publicly confess Him, Christ says: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty, and of His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke ix, 26). On the other hand, he who praises God with his mouth, but whose heart is not with God, is one of those whose praise is rejected by God with the words: "This people honor Me with their lips but their hearts are far away from Me."

The divine praise therefore must issue from heart and lips alike. And this necessity is expressed by the fact that to the commandment requiring the faith of our hearts is immediately joined the second commandment which concerns our speech. God prohibits in the second commandment the desecration of His name, and commands its glorification by using it properly. Its proper use means that recourse should be had to it in our necessities; that it be invoked with due deference when profitable or needful.

In expounding these truths I shall explain: (1) the significance of the holy Name; (2) the proper use of the divine Name.

David the illustrious prophet, in contemplating the all-pervading majesty of God, exclaimed: "How wonderful is Thy Name in the whole wide earth." "So wonderful is it," says St. Justin, "so indescribable, that it is vain to seek a name that would perfectly express God's attributes."

Meanwhile, St. Thomas tells us, in order that we may speak of God, we give Him different names in which His magnificent attributes are mirrored. Thus we call Him the Way, the Truth, the Light, the Life. We call Him the Good, the All-Beautiful, the All-Wise, the Loving, the Lord. Of all these names, God has chosen one as most worthy of Him and most pleasing to Him, and this is the name "Lord." This name He uses of Himself with preference in Holy Writ. "I am the Lord," He says through Isaias (Is. xlii, 8) and through Jeremias: "This is the name that they shall call Him; the

Lord our just one" (Jer. xxiii, 6). And the royal singer says: "They shall seek thy name O Lord"; and adds: "and let them know that the Lord is Thy name."

In the New Testament also God uses this name. So He says: "You call Me Master, and Lord: and you say well: for so I am" (John xiii, 13). The name Lord expresses the omnipotence through which God made all things (Ps. cxiii); it comprises the infinite wisdom and providence with which the Lord guides all things. This name contains the boundless goodness with which He preserves everything, and with which He treats us, His servants, so lovingly. This name, finally, comprises in itself that inexhaustible mercy with which He ransomed and redeemed us with His Blood. It therefore expresses all attributes that distinguish Him as the only true God, and which prove sufficiently that we, on our part, must show Him all reverence, all honor, all love. With this name the Saviour repelled the evil spirit and said to him: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

However, in the New Testament, God chose an additional name, the most holy name of Jesus Christ. We join these two names and say: our Lord Jesus Christ. This name was announced by the angel at the Annunciation, when he said to Mary: "Thou shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for He shall save His people." And amidst sorrows He bore this name unto death; that in death, through the agonies of His Passion, its signification, Redeemer, should become a complete truth. Therefore the Apostle in the Epistle to the Philippians writes: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell" (Phil. ii, 10).

How then may we properly use this divine Name? The second commandment gives the answer: Thou shalt not take it in vain, which means not in levity, or without reverence. A reverent awe, the fear of misusing it, should restrain us from pronouncing the holy Name without piety. For this reason it is a beautiful custom to incline the head reverently whenever we speak this sacred Name, that we may be reminded, and remind others, of its supreme dignity. By the name of Jesus cripples were made straight, the palsied arose, the lame walked, the sick were made whole. How it must sadden

every true Christian to hear this holy Name reviled. And alas, the desecration of this sublime Name, by turning it to base use as a curse word, has become only too common in our days. This Name is so generally abused for unholy purposes that this terrible blasphemy hardly even receives attention. If men must show their vulgar instincts by swearing, they might at least leave alone the sacred Name of God, but it is as if the devil forces them to confess kindred with him by impotently raging against the Name of their creator.

O, that this holy Name may prove for us its miraculous power. May it help and protect, console and strengthen us when we invoke it in need and peril.

Dear brethren, make it your practise to honor the name of God, the name of Jesus, when you arise in the morning and retire at night. Invoke the holy Name often through the day, commend yourself, and those dear to you, to the powerful protection of the holy Name.

On going to work it is well to say: "I will do this in the name of the Lord, for the glory of God, and for the salvation of my soul."

When you see that with God's blessing you are doing well, it is meet and just to exclaim: "Praised be the Name of the Lord, and blessed throughout eternity." And when the Lord sends you visitations, to prove your steadfastness and to increase your merits, again praise His holy Name, because He has Himself assured us that: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; to all that call upon Him in truth (Ps. cxliv, 18). Amen.

## About Oaths

We have contemplated in our last instruction our duty to honor, praise and glorify God's holy Name at all times, to confess His Name before men, and to invoke it for our benefit and welfare. We may also invoke it in testifying to the truth, in the interest of justice, and to protect the innocent. This happens when we invoke the name of God as witness in courts, in avowing our intention to carry out faithfully a public or private trust, or in testifying to the truth on other occasions when lawfully required.

In both cases we appeal to divine Truth to confirm a promise given, or to render a statement more credible than it would be upon our simple affirmation or denial.

We must now remember the words of Christ, who said: "But I say unto you, not to swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God. Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh from evil" (Matt. v, 34-37). These words make it appear that Christ prohibited swearing altogether. This is not so when the oath is proper, and when the name of God is thereby honored. To call God to witness in a proper matter means to affirm that God is all-wise, and that nothing that takes place is unknown to Him. He who calls God to witness, confesses that God is true and faithful, who neither can deceive nor be deceived, that Divine justice will punish those persons who take a false oath, although they may hide the untruth or faithlessness from the world. He who calls God to witness, confesses that God is the most excellent and most reliable witness.

Consequently, it is a proper and a sacred matter to swear on suitable occasions. For this reason the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob swore; King David swore, St. Paul the Apostle swore (Rom, ix, 1), the Angel of the Revelations swore (Apoc. x, 6). God Himself swore, and He even recommended the oath in the words: "Thou shalt swear by My Name" (Deut. x, 20). What therefore did Christ mean by the words: "I say unto you not swear at all?" We must know that the Pharisees at the time of Christ taught and maintained that God only forbade swearing falsely: that it was not an oath to swear by something created: and that one might swear on any and all occasions, even if most unimportant and

insignificant. Christ opposed these pernicious doctrines and He said for this reason: "You shall not swear," meaning in the manner as the Pharisees and Jews were wont to swear. He did not mean to say that swearing was altogether forbidden, but rather that it was not proper to swear about trifles; He cautioned us that we should take an oath only with circumspection, and only in important matters, and then to swear in such manner that God's Name would be truly honored.

God Himself has stated when we may lawfully swear: "Thou shalt swear," He says, "in truth, in the tribunal and in justice." If none of these conditions are present it is wrong to use an oath. If truth, the tribunal, or justice, require it, then we may properly swear. These three conditions impose the duty that we swear in truth; *i. e.*, the matter about which we swear must be perfectly true, and known to us as true. The person taking oath must know exactly what he swears about. He must state as certain that which he knows is certain, and as doubtful that which he knows is doubtful. He who swears that something is certain when he is in doubt about it, swears falsely.

Mature reflection is therefore requisite before we swear to anything. An oath is one of the most sacred acts that a Christian can undertake.

We must, furthermore, swear in justice, that means we must only confirm or promise by oath that what we can say or do without sin. It is sinful to swear, therefore, to do or say anything that is contrary to justice, something that is wrong or unfair. If it is a sin to do these things, it is even a greater sin to call God to witness that we intend to commit this sin. For instance, to take an oath never to forgive another person, an oath that we intend to take revenge, or that we will conceal something that should not be concealed in justice, these and all oaths of this description are contrary to justice, and therefore sinful. All oaths and avowals that are contrary to the honor and the laws of God are sinful. They violate the second commandment, which ordains that we honor the name of God. Amen.

## On Blasphemy

While the tongues even of the angels only utter with holy awe the name of the Lord, there are human tongues so vile and forgetful of duty, respect and decency as to use the sublime name of God in blasphemy. Oh, if men were only in a small degree so zealous in honoring the name of God as they seem zealous in dishonoring the same.

What is blasphemy? Blasphemy in general is a disrespectful, contemptuous and offensive utterance against God, against His saints, or the divine mysteries. It is blasphemous to attribute to God a quality contrary to His sanctity and perfection. Those persons do this, for instance, who say that God is unjust or cruel; that He is a merciless or revengeful Master who will not be moved by entreaties. We blaspheme God when we deny something that is of necessity inherent to Him, as His wisdom, His justice, His mercy, His providence. In this manner all those blaspheme God who say that God does not know everything that takes place; that He cares not for every individual; that Jesus Christ is not equal to the Father; or, that the Holy Ghost is not God. We blaspheme God when we attribute qualities to a creature which belong to God alone; for instance, that everyone of his own power can do good and shun evil, and that to lead a virtuous life we need not God.

It is also blasphemy to speak of the saints in an unbecoming and derogatory way. We have already learned that the veneration of the saints is indirectly a worship of God. He who honors the Blessed Virgin and the other saints in heaven, honors God in them, for "God is wonderful in His saints." In the same way, he who dishonors the Blessed Virgin, or other saints, dishonors God in them. For this reason any unbecoming and improper speech concarning the Mother of God and the saints is blasphemy. It is blasphemy, furthermore, to speak disrespectfully or wickedly of the Passion of our Lord, of the holy Mysteries, and Sacraments. For the sacred Blood of the Lord made them fruitful, and through His Blood they have their cleansing and sanctifying power. Hence it is blasphemy to try and make the holy mysteries of our religion a subject of ridicule, of contempt, of scandal.

Nor must you suppose that blasphemy can be committed merely

by speech. Blasphemy may be committed also by thought and action. They commit the sin of blasphemy who harbor thoughts contrary to the attributes of God, for instance, who despair of God's mercy, who believe that God cannot or will not forgive them their sins, or that God refuses to give help if properly asked for it.

God is blasphemed by action if we do anything that in and of itself is a wicked action against God or His saints. A person who in contempt or anger strikes a crucifix, throws it on the ground, or otherwise dishonors it, or who treats with such contempt the statue of a saint, commits blasphemy by his act. Such acts speak louder than words. For this reason the Jews committed a blasphemy, when they, upon Mount Calvary, made Jesus the object of their derision, for the Scripture says: "They blasphemed Him, wagging their heads" (Matt. xxvii, 39).

What shall I say of the enormity and gravity of this sin? Indeed the mere description of sins of blasphemy is enough to cause Christians to shudder. What a terrible affront for man, in spite of his impotence and frailty, to go so far in his presumption as to rise up against his Lord and Creator, to utter words of rebellion and abuse against God Himself!

All other sins usually arise from weakness or ignorance; but the sin of blasphemy is directly the result of malice. Hence the holy fathers stigmatize it in expressions that should make the Christian heart tremble. "I can think of nothing more frightful," writes St. Jerome, "than blasphemy: for all other sins seek to attack that which is created; blasphemy however attacks the Creator." "It is a diabolical vice," writes St. Bernard, "because the cursing and blaspheming of God is the language of hell." To blaspheme and curse God is the occupation of the damned, and those addicted to this vice utter the language of hell; they make it manifest that they are doing the bidding, not of God, but of the devil. The blasphemer will be forsaken not only by God, but also by the saints, for it is written, "If one man sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf: but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?"

In view then of the gravity of this sin, it is easily understood that not only the Lord and the Church, but even the wordly authorities decree that the abuse of God or the saints shall be atoned for by severe punishment.

God Himself instructed Moses how blasphemers of His holy

Name should be chastised. The blasphemer was to be stoned to death. And before the sentence was carried out, all who had heard his blasphemies were to place their hands on the culprit's head and say: "Thine own wickedness has led thee to death, not we. The blasphemer therefore is to be stoned to death" (Levit. xxiv, 14).

The Church in the early times decreed that he who knowingly uttered a blasphemy against God, the Blessed Virgin, or a saint, should stand at the door of the Church for seven consecutive Sundays during divine worship, and on the last Sunday should do so barefooted and with a rope about his neck. He was obliged also to fast on bread and water every Friday throughout the seven weeks, and during the entire time of penance he could not enter any church. If he did not submit to this penance, he would be prohibited from ever entering the church, and at death would be refused Christian burial.

Neither were the temporal authorities lax in condemning this crime. During the reign of St. Louis, King of France, the culprit was put in the pillory, and if he repeated the offense, even more severe punishment was visited upon him.

In our days, alas, it has become common to hear the glory of God publicly assailed. But the Lord of Lords has not relinquished His scepter on high, and if the arm of temporal justice has become inadequate, and profanity opens wide its blasphemous lips, and defiantly mocks everything that is holy, Divine justice is but abiding its time, and the blasphemer cannot escape his fate, however long it may be delayed.

All these facts, my dear brethren, impress upon us the great importance of the Second Commandment, and of the strict demand of God that His holy Name be honored. God the All-merciful will not be called in vain, He hastens to the help of those who call Him in prayer and humility; and responds with just punishment to the derisive calls of the reprobate. Amen.

## Blaspheming the Creatures of God

In a previous instruction I spoke of the sin of blasphemy and of the punishments which God, as also the Church and the state, ordain for blasphemers.

Now I suppose that most people, with Pilate, will wash their hands and say: "We are not guilty of this sin, we utter no blasphemies." And yet you have only to pass along the streets and highways, or to listen to men at their work, to hear no end of blasphemies. While these blasphemers may not directly scoff at God or His saints, still they insult Him in His creatures. This kind of indirect blasphemy has become so prevalent that outside the Church there are indeed very few public places where our ears are not shocked by it.

Indirect blasphemy is committed in cursing fellow men, other creatures of God, and, finally, by cursing oneself. Many curses are uttered at unreasoning and inanimate creatures and at the functions of nature. If something does not happen just as we would have it, imprecations often result. He who wants rain, curses if the sun is shining. He who would have sunshine, curses at the rain, at the snow or storm. This one curses because the weather is cold, that one, because it is warm. The mechanic curses at his tools, the driver at his horses. And if the earth were to open and swallow up all those who curse and blaspheme, then of those who go forth in the morning to the labors of the day, few would return at eventide.

And all to what purpose? Do the animals understand it? Or does it further your work, to hurl curses? How unreasonable it is to become angry at things that are natural, and to curse them. You gain nothing except to heap sin upon sin and to drive the blessing of God from your labors.

The best thing to do when you feel anger and impatience rising within you, and you fear you will lose your self-control is to think of God. You will find that you will make more progress with an "Our Father" devoutly breathed in your heart, than with all the swearing and cursing that you may be able to utter.

God has given us a great commandment, the commandment to love our fellow men. He Himself said that this Commandment is, as

it were, the touchstone whereby His true disciples may be recognized: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Our fellow men are made by the hand of God; made after the divine image and likeness; they have all been redeemed by Christ's death on the Cross; they all have a precious immortal soul destined to behold God and to sing His praises forever. For this reason we should all be as brothers and sisters, and the Lord Himself has commanded us to love our fellow men as ourselves. The very contrary however to loving our neighbor is to wish him misfortune, shame and ruin. This is not love, but hatred.

Most grievous of all is it to hear parents curse their own children. Because they are parents, they consider themselves privileged upon the slightest provocation to heap maledictions upon their offspring. And yet there is no father or mother who ever did their children any good by swearing at them. The child loses respect for a parent who swears and curses. Instead of cursing, give them a good example; censure and punish them if necessary, but do so with dignity and without swearing; then will you have the promise of the Holy Spirit that they will amend without much trouble and be good children (Prov. xxii, 15). Then, again, there are persons who not satisfied with cursing unreasoning creatures and their neighbors, even wish harm to their own body and soul. Some one is visited by misfortune, by failure; everything is not as one would have it, and anger takes possession of him, he curses his eyes, his hands, his reason, his own soul even. The horrible expression, "I will be damned" comes only too readily from the tongue of many men, of those even who pretend to be Christians.

What language is this? What words from the lips of a Christian? Do you know that your soul is as dear to the Lord as His own most Precious Blood? And you say "Damn me!" Do you know that for your soul Christ died the death of the Cross? And you have the insolence, the hardihood, to damn your soul.

God hears your swearing and your curses, and all you who have words like: hell, devil, God damn it, and so forth, on your tongue you have indeed reason to fear that God abandons you to the evil one whose language you talk.

Say not that you do not mean what the words imply. The Second Commandment forbids such talk, and you are sinning against the Second Commandment, and many hearing your godless talk will be

scandalized and provoked to return curses for curses. Therefore stop this unholy talk, fight this sinful habit with all your strength, and pray to God for assistance to get rid of it. And begin now, at once, as a fit preparation for your approaching Easter confession. And if you persevere manfully and use the means prescribed by your confessor, this sinful habit will with God's grace soon and forever be conquered, for your own benefit here and hereafter. Amen.

## False Oaths, Perjury

In a previous instruction I have explained to you the nature of an oath. It is necessary to consider how the oath may be misused and also the terrible sin which is committed by taking a false oath, by swearing falsely.

He who swears falsely, who affirms an untruth by calling God to witness it, cries to heaven: "Come, O God, and confirm this lie, this falsehood, so that injustice may prevail over justice." What awful blasphemy, what fearful insult! It is really a matter of surprise that those who swear falsely are not struck dead on the spot.

The false oath is not only a crime against God. It is a crime also against mankind. He who swears falsely does so either to defeat human justice or in order to do injury to his fellow men, and he who commits a sin of this kind cannot receive absolution until he rights the wrong done, and makes what restitution he is able to make.

A false oath is committed by those who confirm a falsehood by invoking the name of God, or who so confirm a statement about which they are in doubt.

A great crime too is committed by those who have promised on oath something that is of itself good and proper, and do not fulfil it or act contrary to their promise.

There is a great danger of swearing falsely for those who are in the habit of swearing about every trifle. For this reason the Holy Ghost exhorts: "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing: for in it there are many falls." And this is an additional reason why you should shun the sin of cursing and swearing.

Oh, that none among you who are now listening may belong to a house over which the same God has declared: "This is the curse, that goeth forth over the face of the earth, to the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof." May God graciously preserve us against the great crime of trifling with His holy Name. Amen.

## Keeping Holy the Sunday

God is the author of all days, and there is no day in time or eternity that He has not made. Nevertheless, there is one day called in a special manner the "Lord's day." Christ has made this day holy by His Resurrection from the tomb on this day. And that we may never forget the priceless blessing which thus was our portion on this day, the Church has ordained that we observe our Sabbath, or day of rest, not upon the seventh or last day of the week, like the Jews, but on the first day of the week, on Sunday, chiefly in commemoration of the fact that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, arose from the tomb on Sunday and thus sanctified this day above all others. Hence the Sunday is called the Lord's day.

This is the chief reason why we Christians observe our Sabbath the first day of the week, the Sunday. But there are other reasons, let me mention a few: It was on a Sunday that Christ appeared to His apostles after His Resurrection and gave them the power to remit sins, and on a Sunday He sent down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles.

The Church commands us in the Third Commandment to sanctify the Sunday. Let us consider what it means to sanctify the Sunday.

There are many of the opinion that to observe the day of rest means just doing nothing, and that the Sunday is a day of idleness. The Commandment, it is true, forbids servile work, not that the time thus gained be spent in idleness, but rather that we should have more leisure to serve God on this holy day, to attend to the welfare of our souls, and thus increase our merits for the life everlasting.

Among the good works that we should especially perform on the Lord's day are attendance at holy Mass, the reception of the holy Sacraments, and attendance at the afternoon or evening services.

It is the law of the Church that every Catholic must assist at the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass on Sunday, under pain of mortal sin, unless he be lawfully prevented. Furthermore, since God commissioned His apostles to go forth into the world, to announce the Gospel to all creatures, the priests, as successors to the apostles, are obliged to preach the word of God to their congregations on this day. Man cannot be saved without faith, and he who will not be

instructed in his faith, cannot know the right faith. The sermon is therefore an important part of the Sunday service and it is the Catholic's duty to listen to it with becoming attention. Sunday is also the special day for most people to receive holy Communion, because on that day they have the time to perform this most sacred act with becoming devotion, while on week days many people are unable by reason of their work to approach the holy Table.

After attendance at Mass there are many hours left of the Sunday and some of this time may be profitably employed in visiting the sick, in reading good books, and in taking our recreation in a proper manner.

Of course, it cannot be said that everybody must do all these additional good works on every Sunday; but one or the other of these works can usually be done, and thus the rest of the Sunday spent in a manner pleasing to God. There is one other very important duty included in the observance of the Lord's day, a duty that specially concerns parents. As it is the duty of every Catholic to seek instruction in our holy Faith, so it is a particular duty for parents to get their children instructed in our religion, and the chief means of this instruction is in many of our parishes the Sunday School. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and it is of the greatest importance for the child to be thoroughly trained in the holy truths of our faith, and to become accustomed in its holy practices. Therefore you parents keep a strict watch over your children on Sundays, make them attend Mass and Sunday School, and see that their leisure time is not spent in a way that will endanger their faith or morals. Amen.

## Desecration of the Sabbath

I have explained to you in my last instruction what is commanded by the law: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath, or Sunday."

Unfortunately, this law is much sinned against. We will inquire to-day how this command is chiefly violated.

Sunday is the day of God and not the day of Mammon; a day for eternity and not for time; a day for our soul rather than for the body. Sunday should recall to us the great truth that: all our endeavors, all our efforts are lost if they are not directed to our salvation. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he suffer the loss of his own soul." God has commanded that the Sabbath be observed by abstaining from every servile labor which is not absolutely necessary. Those that make of the Lord's day a work-day for added gain, without real necessity, they commit a sin against this command of the Lord, a sin so much more grievous if on account of this work they neglect to attend holy Mass. Remember that all your efforts will be without avail unless the blessing of God is upon them. But you cannot expect God to bless your work if you perform it in violation of His command. His blessing will rest upon the labors of those who exert themselves throughout the week, as is their duty, but who observe the Lord's day no less conscientiously, and who also see that their families do the same.

There are others, again, who, because prohibited from working on Sundays, think they have a right to be idle. It is, however, one thing to abstain from labor as the Church would have it, and another to be idle. Work is forbidden that every one may have more time to attend to the business of his salvation, to turn his soul to that which is above, and his thoughts to the great truths: death, judgment and eternity, truths which in the temporal cares of the week are likely to escape attention. On Sundays the Church opens up her treasures. Her table is spread with the Holy of Holies in order to refresh the tired soul with the Bread of Angels. On that day the word of God is proclaimed in sermons and in Sunday school. On week days many people cannot find time to go to church. If their Sunday is not employed in the salvation of their soul, what day will be?

Even worse offenders against the Sabbath are those who disturb the holiness of the Sunday by doing evil instead of good, or by doing good works not for the sake of God, but for their own glory and vanity. Those who go to church merely to show off their fine clothes are among them.

Those, furthermore, who make the Lord's day a day of intemperance, of gambling, of visiting dance halls and other places of ill repute, are desecrators of the Sunday, and invite upon their heads the wrath of God. They make of this day of holiness a day of abomination. The Lord has said: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day," and as He will punish those who dishonor Him by seeking other gods, or by reviling His holy Name, so will He visit with severe chastisement those who desecrate the day which He appointed as the Lord's day. Amen.

## Work That May Be Done on Sundays

I will to-day explain to you when and for what reasons work may be done on Sundays without sin.

Work of any description may be done, in the first place, by special permission of lawful authority. Pastors and confessors may, for important reasons, dispense from the commandment in as far as the Church gives them the authority to do so. It is the Catholic's duty to ask for the permission. But if the work is pressing and there is not time for securing the permission, the permission can be lawfully presumed. But even then the work should not be done during the time for divine service, and care should be taken not to give scandal.

Another valid excuse for doing certain work on Sundays and holidays is the habit or custom of a country. Where some certain Sunday or holiday work is the universal custom, and is not expressly forbidden by the spiritual authority, it may be considered permissible. Since the spiritual authority knows of this custom and says nothing against it, it tolerates the performance of the work. Hence it is allowed on Sundays, for instance, to buy and sell commodities needed for the household; understand, however, that this work must not under any condition interfere with the attendance at Mass of those who are concerned in it.

Work is allowed on Sundays if its purpose is the glory or the serving of God. In order to promote this glory one may perform work on Sunday, such, for instance, as ringing the bells, erecting and decorating altars, working the bellows of the organ, etc.

The exercise of charity to one's neighbor is also allowed on Sundays, for instance, to attend the sick, prepare their medicines, to wait upon and nurse them, this is even allowed if Divine worship has to be neglected. The Church excuses from the obligation of hearing Mass those who must remain in attendance upon the sick, or upon very young children, if there is no one else to attend to this duty.

Another instance in which it is allowed to work on Sunday is the one in which certain work could not be postponed without great damage, or even danger to oneself or to another person. For this reason are excused: officials who have to fulfil duties that

will suffer no postponement, employees who are bidden by their master to work and who cannot refuse without great harm to their interest. In such case employees should respectfully remind their masters that this is the day of the Lord and of rest, but if a deaf ear is turned to this reminder they may perform the work: the responsibility or the sin rests then upon the employer. Should this however happen every Sunday and become the regular thing, the employee should leave such service as soon as possible. Permission to work is given also to servants who are occupied all week and have no time to do anything for themselves, in as far as is strictly necessary, and they have not the means to have this work done by others. For the same reason poor people may be allowed to do some work for themselves, but this should be done so that no scandal is given.

Behold, dear brethren, how kind is the Lord who does not require of us the rendering of service, if it cannot be done without prejudice to ourselves. Truly His yoke is sweet and His burden light.

Allowed on Sundays is the exercise of the arts, as well as occupations that serve our proper recreation. We may study, write, paint and draw, and play musical instruments. We may play ball, even go fishing and hunting after we have heard Mass. For Sunday is not only instituted for the welfare of the soul but also for the needed rest and recreation of the body. This reminds me of the beautiful answer that St. Aloysius once made. While studying at Rome, he played at recreation with his fellow students and some of them wondered at seeing him play with such cheerfulness, and one of them asked what would he do if he were to be told that he would die in two minutes? Aloysius promptly replied: I should go on with the game. And rightly so, for recreation taken in moderation and at the proper time is willed by God, and therefore pleasing to Him. And so after we have performed our religious duties upon Sundays we may seek recreation, remembering the words of St. Paul: I say to you rejoice, but rejoice in the Lord.

## The Fourth Commandment

The fourth of the divine Commandments is the first of those which God has given us with reference to our neighbor. The divine Lawgiver has decreed two chief commands: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God before all things, this is the first and greatest commandment. The second, however, is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Upon these two commandments depends the whole law.

The ten Commandments are in detail the law that is contained in the two chief commandments. Upon the first tablet were written the three Commandments that are the closer definition of the Commandment: Thou shalt love God above all things.

On the second tablet were inscribed the remaining seven commandments, which have reference to the second chief commandment, the commandment of brotherly love. And among these commandments first rank is given to the one of which we shall treat now: "Honor thy father and thy mother."

This commandment takes first place and follows directly after the Commandment to love God, because no one on earth is so near to us as father and mother, and even nature itself obliges us to love them above other fellow-beings. As God is the final origin of all things created, and hence is to be loved and honored before and above all things, our parents, who, by God's dispensation have brought us into the world, must for this reason be honored and loved above all the rest of men. This is ordained by the Fourth Commandment in the words: "Honor thy father and thy mother." And this means that every child must love his parents, and also respect and obey them.

I shall speak to you to-day of the duty of filial love. True love shows itself in mind, in word and in deed. The love of our parents must likewise manifest itself in these three ways. We must love our parents in mind, namely from our hearts. As we must love God with our whole soul, so we must love our parents after God from the bottom of our hearts. We must revere them and realize that we owe to them more respect than to brothers, sisters and relations, more than to friends and to benefactors, more than to any person upon earth. Perhaps they cannot help us as much

as some other persons can, they are possibly not so rich, not so distinguished as others; they may be poor, old, frail, perhaps less educated than their children—nevertheless they are the parents to whom, after God, the children owe their education, their bodily and mental prosperity, even their very life. Hence children must not regard in parents their station, nor their income, nor their means of livelihood. The child's gaze should ignore all this. The truly filial heart thinks of one thing only, it realizes that in accordance with the Divine dispensation they are the parents and represent to their children God upon earth. Against this love sin grievously those who in their hearts despise their parents, who are even ashamed of the authors of their lives. "My son," says the Holy Ghost, "support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength" (Ecclus. iii, 14-15).

Alas, too many sons and daughters are ashamed of their parents. How ungrateful and scandalous! To whom do they owe their success in life, if not in the first place to their parents?

We must love our parents in our speech and demeanor. Children should speak to their parents with respect, politeness, and pleasantness, and avoid contradicting them and disputing with them. If they enjoin or forbid something, children must not show displeasure, anger or reluctance.

Those children sin grievously who answer their parents impudently; who heap abuse upon them, or even go so far as to swear and curse at them. "He that curseth his father or mother, shall die the death," this is one of the first laws that God gave (Exodus xxi, 17).

Filial affection should finally not merely be in the heart and on the lips but also show itself in actions. That means: children must render their parents every assistance they need, if able to give it.

This assistance is not merely to be a manifestation of goodheartedness, it is the children's debt, even duty, their strict obligation. If we are obliged by the law of charity to go to the assistance of everyone without distinction who is in need if we can do so, we are obliged all the more to help our parents from whom we received so much. The Holy Ghost even compares to a murderer the man who allows his father to suffer want.

Even by the natural law we owe to our parents help in their needs. The good they do us, the expenses they incur in order to bring us up, to provide our food, clothing and education, all this is done with the expectation that some day we may be able to repay them by being their consolation and their support.

It suffices to reflect how much care and labor, how many sorrows and sufferings, our good parents have undergone for our sakes, and we must realize that we shall never repay this great debt to our parents in the whole course of our lives.

Children are obliged to procure for their parents everything they may need for their spiritual welfare. They must take care that their parents in their last moments receive the holy Sacraments. They must provide for them a Christian burial and have Masses said for the repose of their souls. They are in duty bound to carry out their last wishes, to pay their debts, when this is possible.

When parents become sick, or old and frail, then it is the children's duty to do everything in their power to make things pleasant for them.

Against this sacred duty do children sin who allow their parents to fall into poverty, to suffer want; children who shut their doors upon their parents, denying them admittance; children who although they receive and house them, do so with open or secret displeasure, and possibly treat them worse than their hired servants, begrudging them every mouthful of food, and even wishing that death may soon take them from the world. Truly this is a terrible sin against the love which we owe our parents.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt live long and all will go well with thee upon earth." These are the words of God, and God has also said: "Curseth be he that honoreth not his father and mother; and all the people shall say: Amen" (Deut. xxvii, 16).

## Filial Obedience

"Children love your parents." This is, as we have learned, the first call of the Fourth Commandment to the child, just as it is the call of nature itself. The child before it can even lisp shows its inborn affection to its mother; father and mother are all to it, its whole world. A child that has no love for its parents is an abnormal, an unnatural child.

This love requires of us to honor our parents in heart, in word and in deed. And in consequence it is a great sin to provoke them, to offend, and to hate them.

"Children love your parents." This is the first duty prescribed by the Commandment, and "children obey your parents" is the second.

God wills and commands that the child should do everything that father and mother order him to do, provided what is ordered is not contrary to God's law. Holy Scripture plainly bears witness to this. "Children," writes St. Paul, "obey your parents in the Lord: for this is just" (Eph. vi, 1). If parents are in duty bound to instruct their children in all things that are necessary for their temporal and eternal welfare; if parents, for neglecting this obligation are punished by God; if they even expose themselves to eternal doom if their children perish through their negligence: then it is plain that children must obey their parents in all things enjoined upon them for their good. How could parents take the responsibility of bringing up their offspring in a Christian manner if the children were not obliged to accept obediently their parents' commands, counsels and admonitions? For this reason holy Scripture warns: 'Children, hear the judgment of your father, and so do that you may be saved" (Ecclus. iii, 2).

It is the duty of children therefore to be obedient in all matters in which it is the duty of parents to command or to prohibit. Therefore they must obey in all things regarding the service of God and their soul's well-being: in all things pertaining to an edifying devout life; in all things required by the honor of their position or sex. For instance: If father or mother orders a child to avoid certain company, certain places; if parents forbid idling or late hours; if they bid children to go to Mass, to attend the sermon, to

study, to take up certain work, in all these things children must obey. For all these commands are proper and just, and it is the duty of parents to impose them, therefore the children are in duty bound to obey.

Sometimes I hear sons and daughters complain that their parents are entirely too strict with them. They forbid all company, playing, dancing, in fact almost every pleasure. I say to them that they should cheerfully obey. For these commands of parents are not wrong and obedience to them is profitable to the children, even if it does appear hard to them.

Take for your example the filial obedience of Isaac, the son of Abraham. God commanded Abraham to kill his only son and offer him as a sacrifice. Truly a terrible thing for a father who so loved his only son. Yet Abraham was willing to obey. And so was Isaac. It was to cost him his life. Nevertheless he had no word in protest, he did not resist although he was full grown and no longer a child. Patiently, like a lamb, he was ready to receive the death stroke because his father commanded it.

A child, however, is not obliged to obey his parents if they order anything that is opposed to God or to justice, something sinful. Parents have no right to give such commands, the authority intrusted to them by God extends only to things that are proper, just and salutary, and therefore children are not obliged to obey commands that are wrongful or improper.

No child is obliged, for instance, to obey his parents if they would endeavor to hold him in the wrong faith, or would prevent him from embracing the true faith.

No child is obliged to obey his parents if obedience to their directions would harm his morals, his honesty, his good conscience.

If son or daughter wish to enter the religious state, parents have no right to forbid it, neither have they any right to compel a child to enter this state. The choice of a state of life must be made with free will.

Parents have no right to command their children to enter the married state. The marriage bond is indissoluble, and marriage is beset with great difficulties, therefore the parties thereto must be free agents in so serious a step.

I do not say by any means that those choosing a religious life, or thinking of entering the married state, should not consult their parents. On the contrary, children should freely ask their parents'

advise, and follow their advise, if it can be done with a good conscience.

The frightful judgment of God which He pronounced upon disobedient children is written in the Book of Deuteronomy: "If a man have a stubborn and unruly son who will not hear the Commandments of his father or mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience, they shall take him, and bring him to the ancients of the city, and to the gate of judgment, and shall say to them: This our son is rebellious and stubborn: he slighteth hearing our admonitions: he giveth himself to revelling and to debauchery and banqueting: the people of the city shall stone him, and he shall die." An awful sentence.

Truly this is a grave matter and one only too often neglected by children in the treatment of their parents. This Commandment is so vastly important, that God, in order to make it more impressive, added to it the promise of temporal welfare for those who hold it in regard. It is the only one of the Commandments so distinguished and as God has a special reward for those who obey this law, so will He no doubt most severely punish those who violate it.

## The Fourth Commandment and the Parents

The same commandment by which children are held to respect and love their parents requires parents to render themselves worthy of this love and respect, by showing that they are indeed dutiful parents and deserving of love and respect. A father, a mother, render themselves worthy of respect and love by doing both that which nature prompts them to do and that which God requires of them. Nature prompts them to love their children; and God requires of parents that they bring up their children in virtue and in the fear of the Lord.

And the secret of a truly Christian bringing up is expressed in the words: love and chastisement.

As chastisement must never be so severe that affection may thereby be destroyed, so love for the children must never be so excessive as to exclude all chastisement. Parents must love their children in moderation, in reason, prudently, and, where there are several children, impartially.

The love of children should have moderation. That means parents must love in them that which is really lovable; namely, their innocence, their affection, their childlike disposition, the Divine image which has not yet been disfigured by sin. These qualities deserve to be loved in children and for this very reason Jesus loved the little ones. But very often the love of children is a blind love, a love without wise moderation, a love which is injurious rather than beneficial to children.

Parents must love their children in reason. That means: as they should never permit their children's health to be imperilled, and as they should be ever on the alert to keep all bodily harm from them, so too should they let nothing happen that might harm their souls.

Parents must love their children also wisely, prudently. They should never give them to understand how much they are beloved. Children are quick to take notice of this and they presume upon their parents' affection, become impudent and bold, and do as they please. If one parent should punish the child for a fault it would be unwise for the other to take the child's part. This foolish inter-

ference undermines the parent's authority and encourages the child in refusing obedience.

Where there are several children there should be shown as much affection for one as for the other. This will foster good feeling amongst brothers and sisters. There is often favoritism shown in families, one child is petted in every way and another neglected: one is fondled and made much of, the other handled indifferently. There may be good cause for showing more affection to one than the other, but it is very unwise to make such a distinction. It breeds among the other children hatred and envy towards the favored brother or sister. We have an example of this in Joseph's brethren. Because their father caused a finer garment to be made for Joseph than for the other brothers, envy arose amongst them, which finally developed into hatred. No partiality therefore, parents! Show your affection, your approval or disapproval without discrimination. In this manner you will preserve peace and affection in your household.

Parents whom God has blessed with children should strive their utmost so to take care of these precious pledges confided to them by the Divine friend of children that none may be lost; to bring up their children that all may go to the dear Lord in heaven. Of the means to accomplish this I shall, with God's grace, speak in my next instruction.

## Chastisement and Love

In my last instruction I pointed out some of the obligations which the Fourth Commandment imposes upon parents. Let us to-day devote some consideration to the Christian education of children. In order to bring up children in a proper and God-pleasing way the parents must point out to them the right way to heaven, they must see to it that the child proceeds on the right path to heaven, they must, finally, lead the child back to the right path if ever he should deviate from it.

The way to heaven is the imitation of Christ. For Christ has said: "I am the way and the life." Therefore it is the parent's duty to teach their children how to imitate Jesus. Parents must instruct their children in the true faith, in Christian righteousness, in the manner of leading a devout life.

As soon as the children have reached the age of reason they must be made aware that their true home is not here below, but that they are put here to earn their place in heaven. They must be told that there is a God, from whom all good proceeds, to whom we should pray for everything that we need, who rewards the good, and punishes the wicked. As they begin to speak, teach them the names Jesus and Mary, as diligently as the names of father and mother. In due season they should be told what they must believe as Christians, and that they must live in accordance with their faith. For this reason parents should often read to them the story of Jesus. Accustom the children early to listen willingly and attentively to the word of God in Sunday School. Talk to them of the beauty of virtue, of the hideousness of vice, of the punishment of sin, of the perishableness of this world's goods, of the great joys that await them in heaven. Dear above all other things should be to parents their children's innocence, and for this reason they should impress the fear of God upon their hearts.

Parents must keep watch over their children. To parents apply the words of Ezechiel: "And if the watchman see the sword coming and sound not the trumpet; and the people look not to themselves, and the sword come and cut off a son from among them, I will require his blood at the hand of the watchman—I have made thee a watchman" (Ezech. xxxiii, 6).

Parents must see with whom their children go; where they stay, what they do, ascertain even what they think, in order that they may not lose their innocence. A single bad companion, a single bad book, a single glance at a vicious picture, may set them on that way on which so many walk to their ruin.

Parents watch over your children! Keep vigil at all times, watch untiringly, watch day and night! See whether they walk upon the right path, and bring them back immediately if you find that they have entered upon the road to ruin.

Parents must reprove their children. If a man is seen to be in danger people call out to him to draw his attention. They call more vehemently as he approaches a dangerous spot. If this is of no avail they run and stop him forcibly to save him from certain ruin. To act similarly is the sacred duty of parents if they see that their children have entered upon the bad road and are hastening towards the ruin of sin. Then parents should cry out, admonish; and if the children hear not, to cry louder, exhort more emphatically, and if the repeated admonition is unheeded, then they should use force; *i. e.,* chastise the child. St. Thomas says that parents sin grievously if they might restrain their children from evil ways by chastisement and yet omit to use it. Indeed, he adds: "Cursed be he who omits the chastisement to which his office obliges him."

Wo to parents who give their children free rein and are silent when they ought to censure. You often hear parents excuse their foolish indulgence with the words: "Youth must have its fling. We have to be indulgent." It remains to be seen whether God in His severe judgment is so indulgent with such parents. Other parents say our children are too big, they heed not our admonitions nor will they take chastisement. To these parents, St. Augustine points out: "You have to do your duty; whether your exhortation bear fruit or not you may leave with God." A father who is really in earnest about his children's proper training, knows well how to compel obedience. He knows that God has given him authority, and has placed in the childish heart a reverence towards parents, which even viciousness cannot entirely suppress. And if it is really a fact that your children will no longer obey, as they are grown up, why did you not make them obedient when they were young?

The Holy Spirit says distinctly: "Hast thou children, then instruct and correct them even in the early years of their childhood. When

once the twig has become a stick it will no longer admit of bending. For this reason man must be taught in his youth, in his childhood, he must be admonished, exhorted, chastised with the rod" (Prov. xxix, 15). And not in anger, to the accompaniment of curses, but with affection and only in order to improve the child should he be chastised. "They will not die," says the Holy Spirit (Prov. xxiii, 13), "if you strike them with the rod." Parents should know how to chastise their children in love, and how to love them in chastisement. St. Chrysostom gives some good detailed advice to parents. He says look to it that the children do not run about idly, that they do not form the habit of lying. Grant them recreation, give them their share of pleasure, make them cheerful, but it must be innocent amusement, something that refreshes the youthful mind in a wholesome way and does not deter from praying and learning. Do not overlook anything that is wrong, but do not strike at once, rather threaten and exhort, and if this be of no avail chastise with stripes. If a child confesses his fault, the punishment should be lenient, for a child who does not deny his faults but acknowledges them, thereby gives promise of amendment.

Parents should furthermore instruct their children, or have them instructed, in what is necessary for them to earn an honest livelihood. Parents should observe their children to ascertain whether they have any inclination for a certain trade or profession, they should not force upon them a trade for which they have neither inclination nor ability.

That which most surely leads children to virtue is the parents' own good example. The path to heaven is rugged and steep, all the more so for the tender feet of childhood. Therefore parents should walk on ahead, showing the way. Then the little ones will step cheerfully along and make rapid strides towards heaven.

Finally, as everything depends upon the Divine blessing, parents should frequently bless their children and commend them night and morning to God's care. The mother of St. Augustine prayed long years for her son, until she finally obtained for him the grace of conversion.

Considering all these things parents must realize that the spiritual and temporal welfare of their children depends largely upon their management and that theirs is a great responsibility. God will demand from them the souls of their children and wo to those who cannot give satisfactory account.

## The Respect Due to Superiors

While Christ has delivered us from the servitude of sin and the devil, and has bestowed upon us the freedom of the children of God, He has not exempted us from other kinds of servitude in this life. His words "render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's" teach us that we must be submissive to temporal authority, and to persons of the law, as well as to Himself. The Apostle Paul says: "Let each soul be subject to the temporal power," and this obedience and respect to superiors is one of the duties imposed by the Fourth Commandment.

Why must we respect our superiors? As fathers and mothers are the rulers of the home, of the household, so there must be superiors and rulers for communities, for cities, for states, for the country. Holy Writ calls them "Princes and leaders of the people, the elders of the community, the fathers of the country." To their care is confided the common weal; in their hands is placed the care for the earthly welfare of the people; it is for them to promote and preserve the best interests of their subjects. They must administer justice, settle disputes, and make laws for the good of the country, in order to promote peace and to guard against transgressions. For this reason they have authority over property and possessions, indeed over life and death, of their subjects, in as far as the proper administration of the country renders this necessary.

This authority has been given to them by God. "By Me Kings reign and princes rule," says God. And St. Paul writes: "There is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii, 1). "Be ye subject, therefore, to every human creature, for God's sake; whether it be to the king, as excelling, or to governors, as sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of the good" (I. Pet. ii, 13).

In this sense St. Augustine exhorts the faithful even to disregard disability and injustice in their superiors, to disregard their worthiness or worthlessness, and have in mind the fact that the same God who gave a kingdom to the pious Augustus, also made a Nero emperor; the same God who placed the crown upon gentle Titus also put the sceptre into the hand of cruel Domitian;

the same God who elevated the zealous Constantine to the throne also gave rulership to the apostate Julian. They all will have to give an account to the King of Kings as to how they filled their office, how they used the power that God placed in their hands. All will appear before His tribunal. For many thousands of years emperors, kings and princes have ruled the people of the Lord, and for each of them the hour came when they had to lay down the crown and respond to the summons, "Give an account of thy stewardship."

God wills that we respect the superiors appointed by Him. They are given us as His representatives, as bearers of the authority which He has given them for ruling the nations.

How then must we honor our superiors? We must show the respect due to worldly superiors in all proper ways. We must speak of them with respect, and criticise them sparingly. "Detract not the King," says the Holy Spirit, "no, not in thy thought, and speak not evil of the rich man in thy private chamber; for even the birds of the air will carry thy voice" (Eccles. x, 20). This should be borne in mind by all those who make it their business to ridicule rulers and superiors. Such persons will find fault with every government, with every office holder. They understand everything much better—and yet they often do not even know how to rule their own little household, their own family.

The Fourth Commandment obliges us also to *obey* our superiors, i. e., to do that which they command, and to omit what they forbid. Obedience is the support of the state. As a school cannot prosper where pupils do not mind the teacher, so authority cannot work to advantage if the subjects do not render obedience. God has instituted authority, and we must obey it. And this is so true that Holy Scripture warns us that "whoso resists authority, resists God's ordinance itself."

Opposition to lawful authority is therefore rebellion against God's law. The Apostle says distinctly, "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii, 1).

Even if superiors are unworthy, so long as they do not command something wicked, we must not refuse obedience. The emperor Julian was an unbeliever, and apostate, a debauched idolater, yet his Christian subjects served him with great fidelity in

all things that were rightful. They refused to worship idols at his command, but in all matters that did not interfere with their faith and virtue, they loyally obeyed him.

And this is the Christian's duty, to carry out conscientiously all lawful commands of worldly superiors. It is his duty also to pay conscientiously the taxes and duties imposed by authorities, for St. Paul says: "Wherefore be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but for conscience's sake" (if you have nothing to fear for having transgressed the law). "For therefore also you pay tribute: for they are the ministers of God, serving unto this purpose. Render therefore to all their dues, tribute, to whom tribute *is due;* custom, to whom custom; honor, to whom honor" (Rom. xiii, 5-7).

The lawful authorities protect us and safeguard our houses and property against injury. How would it be possible to pay policemen, firemen, if no taxes were imposed? For this reason St. Ambrose says: "He who would enjoy protection must also help defray the expenses of the same." And Christ Himself has said: "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and He Himself paid the tax. He paid the tax, although He possessed no property; so much more reason for you who are in pursuit of worldly gain, to subject yourself obediently to the requirements of the temporal authority. This is the Commandment that God has given to all, and we are obliged to obey lawfully appointed superiors in everything that is not opposed to the law of God.

If we do this, we may hope, too, of God that He, the all faithful and good, will not lay upon us anything above our strength. For God is the supreme Ruler, and His dispositions are all directed to our welfare, though with our imperfect vision we may be unable to realize their benefit.

## The Blessing and the Curse of the Fourth Commandment

From all that I have said concerning the Fourth Commandment you have seen that this Commandment concerns almost everyone. It prescribes the duties not merely of children, but also of the laity towards their clergy, of subjects towards their rulers, of servants and workingmen towards their employers.

In order to bring our explanation of the Fourth Commandment to a conclusion, it behooves us to give our special consideration to the blessing that God has promised to those who observe this Commandment. God said: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land," or, as the book Ecclesiasticus has it, "Honor thy father and thy mother and the blessing of God will descend upon thee and rest upon thee" (Eccles. iii, 10). God added no such promise to any of the other Commandments, and the fact that He offered a special reward for the observance of this Commandment is therefore remarkable and significant.

What is the promise included in the Fourth Commandment?

"Honor thy father and thy mother, and the blessing of God will descend upon thee and rest upon thee." The blessing of Almighty God is with those who observe the Fourth Commandment, upon all good children.

The blessing of God rests upon their lives. A long life is desired by everybody. The rich man, at the brink of the grave, would give all his things to have his days prolonged. Money, possessions, position, rank, everything he would joyfully part with to buy a few added years, months, yes, even days. But all the gold in the world is not able to purchase even another minute of life. And this possession, long life, held of more value than all the treasures of kings and princes, God offers to the children who honor their parents. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long lived upon earth" (Ephes. vi, 3). Children who make use of the life that they received from father and mother to honor these authors of their lives, deserve that God should prolong their lives, which they apply to such good purpose. True, we see sometimes that obedient, industrious, good children die in the bloom of their youth. God's ways are not our ways, and it is not given to us either to understand or criticise His dis-

positions. But those who faithfully observe this Commandment may confidently place their trust in God's promise, and we have examples all about us that a long life is generally their reward.

The blessing of God rests also upon the efforts of good children. God blesses their undertakings. "He that honoreth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure" (Eccles. iii, 5).

To those who have been good children God generally gives good children. He desires that they too may taste the joys of having good, obedient, virtuous children. "He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children" (Eccles. iii, 6).

The blessing of God rests upon their souls. "Have patience with thy old father, and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the fair warm weather" (Eccles. iii, 17).

The blessing of God accompanies good children into the world to come. After having lived a long and happy life here on earth, the Divine Friend of children will call them and give them everlasting life, the happiest, the most beautiful life of all. "Honor thy father that his blessing may descend upon thee and rest there unto eternity."

To possess such children is an abundant compensation for the difficulties encountered in bringing them up. Yes, good children are the fountain of blessing which brings unceasing delight to the hearts of father and mother. A good upright child—what a blessing for the parents! "He is the light of their eyes, the staff of their old age, the comfort of their lives" (Tobias x, 4).

Equally numerous are the maledictions which God hurls at those who dishonor and grieve their parents. And this is the curse of the Fourth Commandment. God has so disposed that every heart recoils from a wicked child; such children are spoken of with aversion. 'He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy" (Prov. xix, 26).

The fate of the prodigal son who rebelled against his father befalls even in these days those sons and daughters who heed not their parents' advice and commands, and by their scandalous lives cause them bitter grief.

God is just, and just is His judgment. He permits those who have been bad children to receive from their own children the same treatment that they have meted out to their parents. "With what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you" (Mark iv, 24).

What happened to Absalom, who sought to deprive his father David of the people's affection, who sought his very life even? This wicked son was, through a special disposition of God, hanged by his own hair: his ungrateful heart was pierced, and his body thrown ignominiously into a ditch and covered with stones.

God's curse surely descends upon the heads of bad children, and in this curse share those bad parents who give a bad bringing up to children and through whose fault their children are depraved.

Therefore you parents who would enjoy the blessing and not the curse of the Fourth Commandment, fulfil your duties as fathers and mothers. For the real purpose of the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony is not merely to bring forth children, but to bring them up in the fear of God, thus increasing the number of the elect in Heaven.

## The Fifth Commandment

### Thou Shalt Not Kill

This Commandment is the second of the Commandments that deal with the love of the neighbor. The law to do good to our neighbors includes of course the duty to avoid doing harm to him, and with this duty deal the Commandments from the fifth to the tenth. Of all the ills which we may inflict upon the neighbor, there is none which violates his worldly rights as much as depriving him of his life, and God put first amongst the Commandments that prohibit doing harm to our neighbor, the one "Thou shalt not kill." Think not that this Commandment does not apply to you, though you have committed no murder, and have no intention of ever striking a death blow. There are some things included in this Commandment which concern every one of us.

"Thou shalt not kill." In these words God forbids us to take unlawfully the life given by God to our neighbor. Take notice of the word *unlawfully*. This means that to kill is forbidden only when one does it unlawfully, without right and necessity. If one of you is set upon by someone who seeks to rob and murder you; and if you see no other way to save your life than by killing your assailant, you will do no wrong, commit no sin, by slaying this fellow. For we may, in order to save our own life, resist unlawful assault, even to the extent of killing the aggressor. I say we *may* do so, not however that we must. For if the assailed would rather let himself be killed in order that the other might not depart this life stained with sin, he would be practising an heroic act of perfect brotherly love. For there is no greater proof of love for a person than to sacrifice his life to save the life of the neighbor's soul (John xv, 13).

Likewise it is not forbidden to kill the enemy in just warfare. It is lawful also for temporal authority to have criminals put to death, because this may be necessary to promote the public good, and to secure obedience for the law. When there are bad members in a community who are bent upon doing severe harm to others, they must be punished, even with death. For this reason

God Himself has in Holy Writ prescribed the death penalty for certain crimes (Num. xxxv, 16, 17, 31).

In what manner may the Fifth Commandment be transgressed? It is wrong to suppose that in order to sin against this command it is necessary to commit bodily murder. Murder may be carried out in three ways: in mind, with the tongue, and by actual slaying. In mind all render themselves guilty of murder, who desire their enemy's death, although for fear of punishment, for lack of opportunity, or for other reasons, they do nothing to carry out their wish. All sins are committed with the will, and if a person has in his heart the desire of doing wrong, God who sees the bad will is grievously offended. St. John tells us: "Whosoever hateth his brother is (already) a murderer" (John iii, 15). Holy Writ bears testimony that the Pharisees put the Saviour to death, although they themselves laid no hands upon Christ, but they wished and desired nothing more fervently than that Christ should be put to death. Many murders are therefore committed by desire.

A murder may be done also with the tongue, when circumstances are related, or conversation held, which incite to murder, or, if one counsels or orders murder. For this reason the prophet calls the tongue of the wicked a dagger, because the tongue is in truth an instrument of death that has killed thousands. David became guilty of murder by giving orders that led to the death of the innocent Urias. The Jews clamored for the death of Christ, crying: His Blood be upon us and upon our children, and thus rendered themselves guilty of murder, the murder of the Son of God.

A murder is accomplished, finally, by actual slaying—no matter what may be the means to inflict death, knife, pistol, poison, starvation, or subtle means such as harrassing a person to death. "If you," says St. Ambrose, "can prevent a poor man from starving to death, by giving him food and drink, and do not do so, you are guilty of his death." He who knows that a person is condemned to death innocently and does not prevent it if it is in his power to do so, is guilty of the blood shed unjustly. To kill an innocent child, even before it is born, is a dastardly murder. To kill a child before it is baptized and send it into the next world without the Sacrament of Baptism, is a heinous crime for which God will deal out terrible but just punishment.

That also suicide, self destruction, is forbidden by the law, Thou

shalt not kill, is self evident. To make away with one's own life, if done in full possession of reason, is a crime which, if immediate death results, deprives of all chances to make peace with God.

Let us now consider the evil done by murder.

The murderer commits a most inhuman crime. Man is made after God's image. In him is reflected the Divinity. The murderer deprives his neighbor of life, and with this life of every temporal good. But the murderer robs his victim not only of the life of the body, but if the slain man happened to be in mortal sin, he sends that soul to hell. Oh, awful thought, to send a fellow man into hell! He goes into the next world in a condition which deprives him forever of the vision of God. For this reason the blood of the murdered cries to Heaven for vengeance, and God the all-just curses man-slayers as He once did the first murderer, Cain. "Cursed shalt thou be upon the earth," thus spake God to Cain, "which hath opened her mouth and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand" (Gen. iv, 11). This curse befalls to this day those who soil their hands with human blood by murder.

Brethren, take these words to heart, and examine your conscience as to whether you have not in some way hastened a person's death, by unjust accusation, by withholding support, by cruel treatment, or by other such ways. All these things are included in the Fifth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill. Nor does this Commandment mean the mortal body alone. It forbids also all injury to the immortal soul. Woe to those who have upon their conscience the ruin of a soul, those, who, by word, example, or indulgence, teach and encourage vice or sin. Those even who do not exercise the vigilance and guidance to which their position obliges them. Truly it may be said of those who kill the soul that it were better for them to have never been born.

## Sixth and Ninth Commandments

### SINS OF IMPURITY

We have arrived, dear brethren, at the explanation of the Commandments which prohibit a vice that is so abominable, that, as the Apostle Paul says, it should not even be uttered by Christian lips: a vice of which for good reasons the clergy do not like to speak from the pulpit. However, as God, the most holy and the most pure, has given this Commandment, it is necessary to explain it.

The Sixth Commandment says: Thou shalt not commit adultery; the ninth: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife. The Sixth Commandment forbids the sin in deed, the ninth prohibits the sin even in thought and desire.

By adultery, forbidden by the Sixth Commandment, are meant all deeds of impurity. St. Augustine writes: "As under the prohibition of theft every unlawful use of another's property is understood, so in the Sixth Commandment, by the word *adultery* is understood and prohibited everything that is contrary to purity and modesty; but while a theft may be only a venial sin, if the article stolen is only a trifle, every voluntary act of impurity, however slight, is a mortal sin."

By the Sixth Commandment are forbidden all impure acts, all impure words, conversations, songs, letters, books, if one makes use of them voluntarily to satisfy impure desires. All unchaste thoughts and desires with which one occupies himself voluntarily or intentionally. Finally, everything is forbidden that might be a proximate occasion of sinning against this Commandment. Such are bad company, visiting vile and indecent shows, glances at indecent things or representations, pictures, etc.

The words of the Prophet are only too true: "In associating with the good thou wilt be good likewise; but if thou goest with the wicked then thou wilt too be wicked."

All transgressions of the Sixth Commandment are mortal sins. However slight the matter may seem to be, if the sinful desire be ever so brief, yet every wilful transgression against this Sixth Commandment is a grievous fault, so that whatever is thought, said,

or done, in order to excite sensual pleasure, is every time a mortal sin, a sin which robs the soul of sanctifying grace, excludes it from the glory of eternal salvation, and condemns it to everlasting punishment in hell.

I know very well that in our days these matters are merely regarded as human weakness, as natural impulses. They are not considered to be sin at all, much less mortal sin. Nevertheless the fact remains, that they *are* grievous sins, mortal sins, sins that are punished by God with eternal damnation. This you will understand better if we contemplate the disgrace of impurity.

Dear brethren, what must God experience when He sees before Him man, a living temple of the Holy Ghost, defiled with the filth of impurity? We are temples of God, incomparably more holy temples than temples of brick and stone. At Baptism the solemn dedication of our bodies as temples of God takes place. "Whiter than snow and purer than milk" are the Christian members of the living house of God. Hence the distinct utterance of St. Paul that "you are the temple of the living God" (II. Cor. vi, 16). The impure defile and violate, therefore, this temple of the living God. They truly commit a sacrilege. Astounded at this terrible sacrilege, the Apostle Paul asks: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I. Cor. iii, 16.) Oh, the infamy of impurity! Further, the members of our bodies are, through Baptism, joined to the mysterious sacred Body of Jesus Christ. All the faithful in the vast universe, cleansed in the waters of Baptism and the Blood of Christ, become thereby members of Christ, and form with Him the one immortal body which we call the Church and which He, as Head, guides and rules. For this reason the Apostle Paul proclaims "that our bodies are the members of Christ" (I. Cor. vi, 15). Oh, that you all might fully comprehend the dignity and the sanctity of your body. What then could be more abominable than to defile through our own bodies, by gross sin, the body of Christ, that hallowed Treasure and Sanctuary of Heaven and earth? And this is truly done by all who commit sins of impurity, who, as St. Paul puts it, "Make of the members of Christ, the members of a harlot" (I. Cor. vi, 15).

Again: Christ is the Spouse of our souls. "He has bought us," as St. Paul again says, "at a great price" (I. Cor. vi, 20). This price was His Blood, that He sacrificed for every soul, in order to unite it to Himself in the tenderest bonds of love.

In regard to the harm done by impurity, who could enumerate the lamentable results of this hideous sin? The devil has those impure souls in his full power, and he keeps them bound as with chains, so that they may not escape eternal death. One of these chains is the obscuring of the intellect. Satan blinds the impure to such an extent that though they are forfeiting their good name, their body, their soul; yet, incredible as it may seem, they cannot perceive it. Such persons do not see that they are on the road that leads to hell (Acts xii, 6). St. Thomas says that impurity is the sin which has the peculiarity of so obscuring the mind and the reason of men that they can hardly recognize the serious state in which they are.

The second chain with which the evil one holds the impure, is the hardening of the will. He has hardened their hearts to the point of pertinacity and obduracy. Neither the inspirations of God, nor the earnest reproofs and exhortations of the Confessor, nor even the threats of awful chastisements, are often capable of tearing them from the bonds of sensuality.

St. Bernard writes that no vice yields Satan so rich a harvest as impurity. For eternally true is the word of the Apostle Paul: "Be not deceived: Neither fornicators, not idolaters, not adulterers, not sodomites shall possess the Kingdom of God" (I. Cor. vi, 9). For, "know ye this, that no unclean person hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ" (Ephes. v, 5).

## Impure Thoughts.

In the writings of St. Augustine we read this holy man's complaint that nearly the whole human race seemed steeped in sins of impurity. And, alas, things are not different in our own days. Those whom the enemy cannot induce to impure deeds, he can too often ensnare by impure thoughts. These sins of thoughts are committed easily, no one sees them, none censure them; many persons will make little of them. For this reason the evil one endeavors to incite to impure thoughts; if he can make his victim assent to them his soul is within his grasp.

It is important, therefore, to warn most earnestly against voluntary impure thoughts because they are mortal sins, and the temptations to them are much stronger than to impure acts.

How grievously sinful a single thought may be we see in Lucifer. He sinned merely in thought and was rejected by God for all eternity.

Christ said: that the fornicator and adulterer will not possess the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi, 9). And He explained that the adulterer was not merely the one who committed this sin in deed, but that even one consenting to an evil desire had already committed adultery. It is plain therefore that they who sin in thought sin grievously as well as those who sin in deed.

It is true that a bad thought is not always a mortal sin. But bad thoughts that we voluntarily entertain, and take pleasure in, certainly are grievous sins. Bad thoughts come probably to everybody, even to the most pious, and it is not always in our power to prevent them. They are aroused in us by the world, by the flesh, by the evil one; the world arouses them by vanity, the flesh through concupiscence, the evil one by suggestion.

Impure thoughts that come into our minds from various causes are not sins so long as we do not give consent to them. No power can compel you to consent to sin, because you have free will. God respects the freedom of the will and compels no one, He lets us act without compulsion, even though we may act in opposition to Him. And the devil is unable to overcome a single human being unless that person wills to be overcome.

Thoughts are of three kinds. Some are good and wholesome

thoughts, such as devout thoughts of God and holy things, and these are meritorious; others are indifferent and unprofitable thoughts, such as thoughts on worldly affairs. These thoughts become sinful only when the intention is unlawful, or when they are wilfully entertained during prayer. Finally there are the thoughts that are of themselves sinful and wicked, such as revengeful, proud, avaricious thoughts, and above all impure thoughts, and he who voluntarily entertains, and takes pleasure in impure thoughts, commits every time a mortal sin.

God regards the will of man rather than the action. It is not the hand, nor the eye, nor the body, that commits the sin, it is the will that commands the hand, the eye, the members of the body, to do something that is sinful. Whether bad thoughts are put into action or whether they remain shut up in the soul without being carried out, before God they are mortally sinful. Hence anything that would be mortal sin if done in deed, is mortal sin if one wills it in thought.

You must not imagine now that any considerable time is necessary to commit mortal sin in thought. A single moment suffices. If we consent for one second to sensual desire, in that moment mortal sin has been committed.

The Council of Trent commissioned priests to impress upon the faithful the fact that sins of thought are likely to injure the soul far more than even sin in deed, and are more dangerous than sins committed by exterior action (*Trid. Sess.* 14, *de Poenit.* c. 5). It is often either impossible or at least very difficult to commit sin by deed, whilst sins of thought may be committed without the least difficulty, at all hours, in all places, and thus the soul may by impure thought become so inextricably involved that it goes inevitably to eternal ruin.

Dear brethren, if we see a spark fall upon our clothing we make all possible haste to extinguish it, that no conflagration may result. Protect yourselves with the same or even greater apprehension from the fire that is never extinguished, and remember that the sensual thought is the spark thrown into our minds, and if not routed on the spot it will be stirred by Satan and kindled into a lively blaze by which the soul is likely to perish.

## Obscene Speech.

By using obscene and unchaste language grievous sins are committed, especially as very often such sinful speech leads to acts of impurity and to the seduction of innocent persons.

He who carries on unchaste conversation defiles his own soul, for we are told by St. James that: "The tongue defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of our nativity." That means: the tongue defiles the whole body because evil speech leads to unchaste works: it sets on fire the mind with the pernicious fire of unclean desires. Hence the urgent warning: "But fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you as it becometh Saints" (Ephes. v, 3). Impressive are the words of the Holy Spirit (Eccli. xxviii, 29-30): "Make a balance for thy words, and a just bridle for thy mouth: and take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue, and thy fall be incurable unto death."

He who uses impure speech makes it known that his mind and heart are filled with impurity. By its leaves and fruit is the tree known, and the bird by its song. Christ said: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (Luke vi, 45). Therefore he who speaks with preference of impure and immodest things is rightly suspected of carrying on the trade of impurity.

Immodest speech is, therefore, mortally sinful. It furnishes for the innocent an occasion to learn of evil things, and for the wicked an occasion to busy their minds and tongues with them. They enkindle the pernicious fire of impure desire which feeds the flames of hell, and causes souls to burn here in the fire of impurity and hereafter in the fire of hell. Unchaste speech is a pest, a poison, that brings ruin to young and old alike.

Hundreds and thousands have experienced the truth of this. They have been infected by the vicious conversations so often carried on in workshops, in saloons, at dance halls, everywhere, in fact, where people congregate for work or for pleasure.

Among immoral conversations are to be classed those indecent and vile jokes and stories in which so many foul-mouthed persons rejoice, as also the vulgar songs with double meaning which are now so often heard. "Abandoned and impure persons," says St. Augustine, "delight in songs that are quite worthy of their evil

minds. The uncleaner the meaning, the more they like the song."

And not only do they sin who talk or sing of impure things, but also those who deliberately and with pleasure listen to them, because they voluntarily expose themselves to the danger of arousing bad thoughts and desires.

Many say, of course, "I mean no wrong; I only speak or sing in jest." St. Alphonsus replies to such an excuse: "Your jest will make the devil laugh and will make you weep throughout eternity." For even if you really do not mean wrong, yet you know not whether others do not put an evil construction upon your words.

Others say: "I listen to bad talk, but take no pleasure in it." This excuse is of little avail. For you sin by voluntarily exposing yourself to this danger of sinning. It is our duty to avoid the occasions of sin if we are able to do so.

What is to be done, then, if contrary to our intention we find ourselves in company where bad talk is carried on? What you should and ought to do is this: You should not by word or expression assent to bad talk; by your demeanor make it known that you disapprove of hearing God so grossly insulted. A displeased expression is an effective reproof for the unchaste. If possible change the topic of conversation, and avoid associating thereafter with the foul-mouthed. Do not fear to offend by letting your disapproval be noticed. Decent people will esteem you for your refusal to have anything to do with vile speech or jokes, and you can afford to ignore the opinion of those who cannot be classed with decent people.

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### Incentives to Impurity

In conclusion of our consideration of sins against the sixth and ninth commandments, it is proper to give some thought to the chief sources for such sins. These chief sources are: Pride, Immodest dress, Gluttony and Intemperance, and Idleness.

Christ said: "Whoso exalts himself (through pride) shall be humbled (through disgrace)." Pride goes before the fall, and that fall is often due to the sin which is particularly shameful. St. Cyril did not hesitate to say, "Show me a proud soul that is

chaste, and you will be showing me a miracle of nature." He meant to say in the natural trend of things a person cannot be given to pride without being unchaste, or soon becoming so. In the matter of immodest dress, we read that the Holy Spirit says: "For many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire" (Eccli. ix, 9). Immodest dress is so dangerous to good morals that the Church in all times has severely opposed such dress in women. Pope Innocent XI. in a special brief declared that immodestly or frivolously dressed women are unworthy to partake of the holy Sacraments.

The next of the chief sources of concupiscence is gluttony and intemperance. The unchaste devil can be expelled only by fasting and prayer. Even the Saints had to fight this devil and therefore they deprived themselves of food and drink, taking thus the fuel from the fire. As sobriety and moderation in eating and drinking extinguish the fire of concupiscence, it is true also that intemperance in eating and drinking, gluttony and drunkenness are powerful incentives to concupiscence. "Where gluttony and drunkenness prevail there abides concupiscence of the flesh," says St. Jerome. We read that when the flood came "men did eat and drink, they married wives and were given in marriage, until they were all destroyed" (Luke xvii, 27). Yes indeed, drunkenness is a dangerous source of unclean deeds. "Wine is a luxurious thing," says Holy Scripture, and "Be not drunk with wine wherein is luxury" (Prov. xx, 1). Dance halls, these hotbeds of impurity, are so dangerous chiefly because they are nearly always connected with opportunity for excessive eating and drinking. Hence the fire of concupiscence burns so fatally in places where there is both dancing and drinking.

The third chief source of impurity is idleness. Holy Writ says: "For idleness has taught much evil" (Eccli. xxxiii, 29). For this reason the Holy Fathers have called idleness the father of impurity, and of concupiscence.

When a person is occupied with work the evil one has not much chance of getting attention for the evil whisperings. But to those with whom time hangs heavily on their hands, he can suggest how they may pass the time in impure pleasures.

And this is so true and so obvious, that many if not most sins of impurity are by working people committed on the very day that should last of all be devoted to such things, the day of the Lord, the Sunday. While on week days work protects these people

against such sins, they have hours of idleness on Sundays, and in these hours the evil one besieges them with temptations, and, alas, to often, they fall.

Watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation. Avoid these chief sources of impurity. Like all other ills they are more easily avoided than cured, and those who do not avoid the occasion are almost sure to fall.

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## The Means to Attain and Preserve Chastity

I hope, dear brethren, that our considerations of the infamy of sins against the Sixth Commandment will have awakened in you a lively horror of such sins, and I hope the sincere desire for a pure life has been intensified in your hearts. To accomplish this you must carry out your resolutions and make use of the means to lead a chaste life.

The first requisite to live a life of chastity is the grace of God, for which we should pray daily. We are all weak and frail and exposed to many temptations. Every human being is possessed of an inclination to impurity. Under such conditions it is impossible to lead a chaste life without special assistance from God. The grace which our prayer draws down from Heaven is, as it were, the dew of Heaven which extinguishes the fire of concupiscence within us. Even St. Paul, who saw that which no mortal eye had ever seen, admits that he was delivered to an emissary of Satan who tormented him with most violent temptations, which by himself he could not overcome, but which did not overcome him. And why was he not overcome? Because St. Paul persevered in beseeching God to deliver him from this temptation, and God promised him His grace, saying: "My grace is sufficient for thee." This is plain proof that one can remain chaste amidst the most violent temptations of the flesh. Is not this a consoling doctrine for all those who, though they sincerely desire to live a chaste life, are experiencing many temptations? St. Paul, who preserved his chastity undefiled, furnishes proof that even most devout persons may be assailed, but that this does not injure their chastity as long as they fall not. Through God's grace which they attain by prayer they do not yield to temptation. We should therefore never omit

from morning or night prayer the petition for the grace of chastity.

The second means for preserving chastity is the fear of God. The fear of God is one of the most powerful incentives to lead a chaste life. "There is nothing more terrible than to fall into the hands of the avenging God." And surely God is called upon to avenge if His own temple, the body, is defiled by impurity, and His image desecrated and given a prey to the devil. Of this we should be reminded when, all unseen by human eyes, we are tempted to sinful acts. Through this thought the fear of the Lord will take root in our hearts, and this fear will greatly aid in preserving us from impurity.

The third means is the frequent use of the Holy Sacraments. They are the efficacious means the use of which gives prompt help.

Those who frequently and with befitting preparation receive Holy Communion will have little difficulty in leading a chaste life. The Communion table is the table of the pure. There is sacrificed the undefiled Lamb of God. As the Blood of the Lamb of God, the Blood of Jesus Christ, extinguished the sins of the world upon Golgotha, so it will extinguish the inclination to impurity in those who piously receive it at the altar.

The fourth means is the strict guard over the senses, and especially over the eyes. The eyes are verily the windows of the soul. "Through these windows death can enter," says St. Gregory, "because they who do not keep guard over their eyes, will soon find their souls filled with evil thoughts and desires." Hence at all times those souls who wished to live continently were severe in guarding their eyes. St. Aloysius was so careful in safeguarding his eyes, that he would speak only with downcast eyes to persons of the other sex.

The fifth means is to avoid those dangerous occasions through which you have fallen, or at least were in great danger of falling. He who so seeks the danger will perish in it. Many thousands of lost souls would never have sinned had they not sought dangerous occasions.

In conclusion let no one who would lead a chaste life neglect to invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary in the warfare against concupiscence. She is the model of immaculate purity—the purest of the pure. Invoke diligently her powerful intercession with God, that you may receive the grace of purity.

In closing my instruction about this Commandment I have a twofold petition. You parents, and all you to whom is intrusted the guardianship over the innocence of little children, I beg you to watch most carefully over this innocence. Watch over your charges and never let their spiritual welfare out of your sight; especially do not permit them unobserved to be with children of the opposite sex. Remember that wickedness is an ingredient of human nature, and precocious companions may bring to your children harm which you may never be able to repair.

Those devout souls who have had the rare good fortune of going unscathed through temptations, I would beg and warn not to feel secure in their position, and not to imagine that they are safe from all harm. Watch and pray that you may not fall just then when you think you are most secure.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God! Blessed are they even in this life, for they live in peace and enjoy the respect and admiration of the world. Blessed are they in the life hereafter, for their reward and glory will be neverending. Amen.

## Seventh and Tenth Commandments

## Thou Shalt Not Steal—Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Goods

### Theft

Although God Himself commanded "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods," these commandments are in our days so generally disregarded that dishonesty, fraud and unlawful imposition are almost too common to attract notice. Nevertheless all these things are sinful.

Stealing is a sin, whether done secretly or publicly, with cunning or violence, whether from the rich or the poor, involving money or other possessions. Theft is opposed to the law of God, a defiance of the law of charity and of Christian justice. In order to distinguish whether a theft is a venial or a grievous sin, there must be taken into account the value of the stolen article and the condition of the person from whom it was taken. The article stolen may be of little value and yet the theft may be a mortal sin, if for instance the person is so poor that considerable injury is inflicted, or if the article is so precious to him that its loss greatly and reasonably grieves him. The widow's mite was indeed but a penny in value, and yet the Saviour said that her offering was greater than all the precious gifts of the Pharisees, because she gave all that she had for her daily support, whilst the Pharisees gave only from their abundance.

We read in the Gospel, furthermore, that Christ condemns those who do not give of their possessions to the poor, and that He will say to them, "I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink: go into everlasting punishment." (Matt. xxv, 42.) If Christ speaks thus, what will He say to those who not only refuse to give of their possessions to the poor, but even deprive them of the little they have? This is manifestly a sin against the Commandments of God, against the law of Charity, against justice, without doubt a grievous sin.

He who is guilty of petty thefts that of themselves do not constitute a grievous sin, but with the intent to obtain gradually

a considerable sum, commits a mortal sin on account of his intention. The stealing of an account book, a receipt, or other important document involving serious consequences for the victim, amounts to a mortal sin, although the paper stolen may have no proper value. These few instances may help you to decide whether theft is venial or mortal.

How shameful in God's sight and how harmful the sin of theft is, does not require proof. In the Books of the Pentateuch we read the rigid law against theft, cheating, and injury to the neighbor: "Do no one an injustice in business, for the Lord thy God abhorreth him that doeth these things, and he hateth all injustice."

God warns thieves through the prophet Zacharias that: "Every thief will be judged and upon his house a curse will descend, and the curse will remain in the same, and all the wood and stone therein will be consumed." It follows, that theft, instead of being profitable, is much productive of harm.

St. Chrysostom in speaking upon this subject tells us: "Wouldst thou be rich, then seek lawful gain. For the latter will stay in your house and hold its own: Money unlawfully acquired is soon lost. That which is taken in evil cannot serve a good purpose."

The thief, moreover, is obliged to make restitution of what he stole or of its value, so that the rightful owner may not suffer harm. Even with sincere repentance there can be no forgiveness of this sin until the stolen property has been returned or the promise of restitution made.

Shameful and harmful as stealing is in general, it is particularly so for the young. Watch over your children therefore, oh parents, that they may not become addicted to dishonesty. In the beginning they do not take much, an apple probably, a piece of bread, a few cents. But "large oaks from little acorns grow," and the habit is easily acquired, the temptation to enrich oneself by dishonest means grows stronger and the innumerable opportunities that offer themselves for taking dishonest advantage will prove of irresistible attraction to those who have not been trained in steadfast integrity.

## Usury

Sins against the sixth and seventh Commandments are of especial vileness. If dishonest people properly realized how hideous before God is the sin of theft in all its forms, they would not make attempts to belittle this sin, as is often done. There is especially one form of theft which is often practised by otherwise quite respectable people and is considered by them proper and businesslike, and that is the sin of usury. Usury is practised in many forms and disguises, all of them to the disadvantage of the neighbor and therefore sinful. What is usury? We have state laws describing and prohibiting the usual and obvious forms of usury, but men manage so to disguise usury under the mask of business methods and usages that it becomes difficult to draw the line between legitimate business and usury. However, the earmark of usury is almost always the fact that undue advantage is taken by the one party of the need or embarrassment of the other.

I say undue advantage, because it is quite proper and legal to exact the legal interest on money loaned, and it may even happen that an extraordinary risk will justify an extraordinary interest. We must be careful therefore not to judge rashly, because there may be circumstances of which we are ignorant. He however who exacts undue percentage of interest, or undue payment in the form of bonus or commission, because the other party is forced by conditions to accept such terms, commits usury. And this is the principle that will hold good in all cases. It is obvious also that he sins by usury who makes such gain indirectly, through knowingly enabling others to commit usury.

Let us be mindful of the words of God. "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor, thou shalt not be hard upon them as an extortioner, nor oppress them with usuries." (Exodus xxii, 25.) "Thou shalt not lend to thy brother money to usury, nor corn, nor any other thing. That man is just who hath not lent upon usury, nor taken any increase, nor has made of himself an instrument of injustice." This was the law even in the Old Testament, and Jesus Christ by giving the Commandment to love our neighbor desired that Christians should assist one another. He said: "Lend to one another without seeking a return." Truly beautiful advice. This of course does not oblige us to lend money to our neighbor at a personal loss, but the Lord's advice means at

any rate without injustice. He who lends to the poor without any or with only trifling interest, lends to God who always repays generously. For this reason there is a visible blessing upon the possessions of wealthy persons who give financial aid to their poor brethren without exacting interest, for it is written, "A blessing upon the head of them that sell, but a curse for him that hideth corn."

The gratification with which the usurer regards his undue gain often renders him unable to see the wrong in his actions. But the hour of death will come and then he will perceive the abomination of his usurious ways, and the fear of the judgment will overtake him.

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## Injustice in Buying and Selling

One of the baneful tendencies of our time is the fierce strife for possession, the unbridled desire to be rich. And yet the words: "For they who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil," are as true in these times as they were when St. Paul wrote them.

This tendency is most apparent in buying and selling, hence it is necessary that in speaking of the seventh Commandment I should point out under what condition buying and selling may become a sin against the seventh and tenth Commandments.

Instead of "buying and selling" let us use the word "trading," it matters not whether in exchange or barter, by borrowing or paying, or in what manner soever. It is not prohibited at all to seek a lawful profit, but often a profit is sought that surpasses lawful limits, and so it happens that in "trading" a great deal of injustice is committed.

Human ingenuity finds new ways every day to defraud and cheat in trading.

There is a poor working man who in order to buy bread for his family finds himself forced to sell either his labor or the product of his labor. Now those who force him to work for less money than what is fair and proper commit by their action a crying injustice and a sin against the seventh Commandment. Those wealthy persons who buy up necessities of life, such as grain, for instance, in order to force up the prices and compel the poor to

purchase these things at largely increased prices, sin against the seventh and tenth Commandments. "Whoso bringeth scarcity into the community shall be cursed among the people," says the Holy Spirit. For such a one unjustly deprives many of his fellowmen and commits a far greater sin before God than a thief or robber who steals from only one.

They also sin against the seventh Commandment who adulterate an article, who sell an inferior article for the better one. And this kind of fraud is most prevalent in our days. Manufacturers and dealers alike seem to have lost all sense of honesty and decency in this respect. They seem willing to put themselves on the level of the common thief in the desire to acquire other people's money.

Finally there is the matter of incorrect number, measure, and weight. God says: "Do no man an injustice in trade—neither with the yard, nor with the weight, nor with the measure; just and true shall be thy weight, and thy bushel shall be equal and true." And again: "Neither shall there be in the house a greater bushel and a less." These words are explicit enough. Nevertheless we know well that the opposite is frequently the fact. One kind of measure and weight is shown to the authorities, and another is used in trading. God warns us that: "False measure and false weight is an abomination before the Lord God, and he abhors those who do injustice." And Isaias calls down the vengeance of God upon unjust traders in the words: "Thou shalt be judged measure for measure." That means, as Christ explains: "With the same measure wherewith thou dost measure will He (God) measure unto you." "Brethren," writes the Apostle Paul, "you know what commandments I have given you—that no man overreach his brother in business, because the Lord is the avenger of all such things" (I. Thess. iv. 6).

I exhort you therefore to lay aside all immoderate desire of enriching yourself. It will not be difficult for you to observe strict justice in your dealings. Do not hamper your conscience with even one unjustly acquired cent. In this way you will be able to lay up for yourself a treasure in Heaven, the attainment of which is the "one thing necessary."

## Restitution

It is as we have learned the love of gain that leads to dishonesty, to usury, to injustice in trading. The gain thus unlawfully made cannot lawfully be retained, and this fact offers for our contemplation the duty of restitution, or the obligation of restoring that which was stolen or obtained by unjust means. This obligation is so strict and binding that the thief will not be forgiven by God if he does not restore to the owner that which he took, or make good the injury he caused, if it is possible for him to do so.

Theft in all its forms is a sin whereby we not only offend God, but also injure our neighbor in his possessions. To efface the sin of theft it does not suffice that we repent of it and confess it, we also must compensate our neighbor for the loss he sustained. Hence it follows that as long as we retain the property of another, or do not fully compensate our neighbor, our contrition is in vain. And it could not be otherwise. For he who says he is sorry for having committed theft, will, if he really is sorry, be willing to return the property of another the retaining of which is sinful for him. But he who goes to confession and yet retains the stolen property, or does not make restitution for the damage, does not appear in earnest about regretting the theft. Therefore all theologians agree that the restitution of ill-gotten property is an act of justice which is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Justice requires this, and he who does not make restitution acts contrary to justice. He who does not make restitution to his neighbor for the injury he has done by stealing, by cheating, by usury, or in other ways, even by stealing his good name through slander and calumny, cannot be forgiven. This obligation of restitution is binding not only upon the one who stole the property, but also upon those who in any way are accomplices in the damage caused to the other party. They too are obliged to make good the loss if the one who actually committed the theft fails to make restitution. Those who order their inferiors to do harm to others, those who advise theft, those who aid by concealing stolen goods or by buying and selling stolen things, those who actually assist in the perpetration of the theft, those who are aware of the theft and keep silent about it if in duty bound to prevent it, as for instance, servants, superiors, watchmen, etc.,—all are in a measure affected by the same obligation.

The chief obligation of course rests with the one who is in possession of the stolen goods, or who has by his act inflicted the damage. If however he does not make restitution, then the others must do so who by their cooperation participated in the sin committed and in the injury inflicted upon the neighbor.

Now let us ask: To whom is compensation to be made? There are not a few who would prefer to make restitution by having Masses said, by giving alms, etc. Confessors hear this very often. Yet what reasonable person can say that we can compensate those who have been injured by giving to others what we have taken? Ask yourself: Can these good works be pleasing to God if provided for by money obtained through sin? Is it lawful to steal in order to give alms, or to have Masses said? Therefore we cannot even for good works employ unjust gain that ought to be returned to the lawful owner. To whom then must restitution be made? The property must be returned to the rightful owners, to those who have suffered loss, if we know them, and if they are still living. If they are dead, then restitution must be made to the heirs or descendants. Only in the event that neither the owner nor his heirs are in existence or known, may restitution be made in some other manner which in such cases will be prescribed by the confessor.

Restitution should moreover be promptly made, for as long as not done, we continue to be in a state of sin. Remember that our confessions, our acts of contrition, our good works, are all in vain unless restitution is made.

To the question: What must be restored? I answer: *Everything* must be restored that is unlawfully taken from another, not merely a part, but all the loss caused by our theft or action must be made good to the neighbor. If a person had stolen one hundred dollars, it would not be enough to return after ten years the hundred dollars; the legal interest that the other might have gained and had lost through the theft must also be paid.

Dear brethren, take well to heart that the sin will not be forgiven before God until everything that we have taken unjustly is given back. The absolution of your confessor cannot efface this sin from your soul if you remain in unrightful possession of another's property. Indeed a priest cannot absolve anyone lawfully who does not restore, or faithfully promise to restore, such property if he is able to make good the loss.

We will now turn in conclusion to the question: How should restitution be made? Restitution must be made either in the property itself that was stolen, or if this is not possible, at least by an article of equal value and quality. If we still have the article, then it must be restored in as good condition as when we took it; if this is not feasible, then we must return something just as good and just as valuable.

Dear brethren, do not expose yourselves to the difficult and often embarrassing necessity of making restitution. Carefully shun all dishonesty in every form or shape. There is no true gain in unlawful possession, and your peace in this world and your salvation in the next are endangered.

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## Eighth Commandment

### "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor."

### Lying and Deceit

The eighth Commandment again presents to us the great duty of Christian Charity towards our neighbor. Not content with forbidding us in the other Commandments to harm our neighbor in his life and possession, God demands that the good name of our neighbor be protected, and gave us the eighth Commandment, enjoining us not to bear false witness against the neighbor.

He prohibits our doing anything derogatory to our neighbor's good name, anything that might injure his reputation. God forbids in this Commandment all lying, all hypocrisy and flattery, as also rash judgment and suspicion.

To-day we shall give our attention to the vice of lying.

A lie may be committed not only by word of mouth but also by other exterior expression, for instance by writing, by assenting or negative motion of the head, etc. We must know that that which we say is not true, for otherwise it is no lie. Hence he does not lie who relates some event that he has heard about and himself believes, although what he says is contrary to fact, for he is not speaking contrary to his knowledge. Moreover there must be the intention to deceive.

Some lies are malicious and intended to injure our neighbor. Others are called "white lies," being told in indifferent matters or in play. Others finally are called business lies or lies of necessity, told to avoid unpleasantness, to further a deal, lies which people claim they must tell in order to keep peace and harmony, and without which they say they would not get through life peacefully.

Malicious lies are always sinful, and may be mortal or venial, according to the greater or lesser injury inflicted upon our neighbor.

In regard to business lies, or lies of necessity, there are only very few people who consider them sins.

Nevertheless it is certain that there is no actual lie that is not a sin; even if merely a business or "white lie," still it is a lie, and for that very reason a sin. The Holy Spirit says: "Be not willing to make any manner of lie" (Eccl. vii, 14). Further: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xii, 22). David says: "Thou, O Lord, wilt destroy all that speak a lie" (Ps. v, 7). And St. Paul writes to the Christians: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor" (Ephes. iv, 25). Holy Writ makes no distinction in lies, but is rigidly opposed to all lying.

In fact, if white and business lies were permissible, the confidence that is necessary in the associations of daily life would be impossible. We no longer could believe our business associates or rely upon their promises. Surely no one likes to be called a "liar." Manifestly because God has implanted in each one of us a detestation of every lie, as being something sinful. We cannot therefore say that such lies are not sinful.

A lie is never permissible, for the lie is in and of itself sinful. Of course there are cases in which one is not bound to tell the truth, indeed, for important reasons it is at times allowable to suppress the true facts in a case or to conceal them, but not by a lie, but by silence or by an evasive answer, although it may in an innocent way deceive the listener. When St. Athanasius was compelled to flee from his persecutors, he came upon some of those who sought him. They did not recognize him in his disguise and asked him whether Athanasius was far from there? "No," he said, "he is not far from here." In this way Athanasius did not lie, for he was indeed not far from them, although he deceived them by concealing his identity.

If then we may not tell a lie even in extreme need, you may easily perceive that we are still less allowed to do so without necessity, merely for fun, to entertain, or to please others. A great responsibility rests with the many parents, who allow their children to lie, and who do not correct them of this bad habit. They do not instil into them a horror of lying, the true idea as to how hideous a vice it is, and how abhorrent to God. Or again they may punish their offspring so severely that for fear of punishment they do not dare speak the truth when they are at fault. You all know the story about George Washington. It is too well known to be repeated here at length. His father knew how to bring up his little son as a friend of the truth. I told you when we spoke of the fourth Commandment that the punishment of a child who acknowledges its fault should always be milder, because the acknowledgment is usually a sign of contrition. We should of course never neglect to make the child understand the malice of the fault and indeed punish it if the fault is considerable, but with moderation in such a case, so that in future it will not suppress the truth for fear of punishment.

Dear brethren, practice honesty in speech as carefully as honesty in dealings. The devil is in Holy Scripture called the Father of Lies, and of those whose tongue speaks deceit it will be said that they speak the language of the devil.

## Tale-bearing, Flattery

While it is consoling to know that we all have at our side a good angel who protects and guards us, we have reason to suspect that there is also an evil spirit constantly following us, an angel of Satan, who combats us day and night and would plunge us into sin. We must, therefore, be on our guard at all times and remember that all the evil spirits together are unable to harm a single human soul if it does not voluntarily surrender to evil by explicit consent.

The work of these invisible agents of evil is furthered and carried on by their many helpers in human shape, and with these must be classed those who by tale-bearing, slander and backbiting, sow discord, dissension, hatred, and enmity amongst mankind. They love to whisper their tales into the ears of others until friendship is extinguished, love made suspicious, peace and unity banished. And no less dangerous are those who flatter with evil purpose. By praising in others qualities which they do not possess, by excusing their faults, even praising them for the same, they bring about what the evil one with all his assaults cannot accomplish—namely consent to, or perseverance in, sin.

Because this vice is so common it is necessary to give it our special attention in the explanation of the Eighth Commandment, which forbids every distortion of the truth.

We may safely say that in every community there are found persons who enter the homes of others with the single purpose of making trouble. They like to give themselves the appearance of righteousness and integrity, and usually start somewhat in this fashion: "I ought not really to mention it, and I tell you only in confidence, because I mean well to you—you will not divulge it—as I should get into trouble," etc. Often there is a grain of truth in the tale, but scandalous details are added which are malicious inventions.

O vile and hypocritical vice! It was the vice of the Pharisees who went to Christ and said: "Lord, why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients?" And then they went to the disciples and said: "Why does your Master eat with Publicans and Sinners?"

Christ saw their base design and dismissed these hypocrites with the fitting words: "You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you will do."

From the example of the Lord, dear brethren, you should learn how to meet such tale-bearers when they come to blacken the character of others. They use the same language to-day as the Pharisees did with Christ. Heed them not, for verily no true word proceeds from their mouths, because they are children of the liar from the beginning, of Satan (3 Kings, 21, 13). They desire, as Holy Writ says (Ecclus. 28, 15), nothing more than to promote unrest among many that are at peace, but for this "the curse shall descend upon them." For this reason: "Be not called a whisperer, for hatred, enmity and contempt, are the portion of the tale-bearer." It is only too true that frequently there prevails amongst the members of the same household, indeed, between husband and wife, quarrelling and animosity, because the members of the house are tale-bearers, because they carry back and forth what they hear, what father says about mother, and so on. Often children do not understand that they do wrong in this, and the fault is with the parents who countenance tale-bearing in their children. Still more culpable are those malicious persons who turn the candor of children to their own purpose by questioning them as to what takes place in the home, thus teaching them to become tale-bearers.

To be sure, when you point out to these tale-bearers the gravity of their sin, and the obligation imposed upon them of retracting their evil gossip, particularly if they have strained the ties between married couples, they generally offer the excuse: "I did not mean wrong. I did not wish to cause bad feeling. I simply desired to caution this person to be on his guard." But I ask this tale-bearer: Are things really as you say? Did you not say more than was necessary and true? Did you not seek your own advantage, and was your heart really moved by charity only? Few tale-bearers can satisfactorily answer these questions.

The flatterer is different from the tale-bearer by this fact alone, that in order to ingratiate himself he makes use not of the faults of friends but of this person's own faults. The flatterer endeavors to conceal the truth from us, to impute to us qualities we have not, to praise us in things that are not praiseworthy. He is of the sect that praises vice and censures virtue, extols what should be condemned, rendering that which is praiseworthy an object of ridicule—in

opposition to all truth and justice. And for this reason flatterers sin against the Eighth Commandment.

The sin of flattery may be committed in many ways. Firstly, by praising and extoling in another something that in and of itself is sinful. A flatterer of this kind sins grievously against the Eighth Commandment; because through this praise false testimony is given, the neighbor is confirmed in wickedness and sin, and perhaps so blinded that in the end he considers his sin as something lawful. The Prophet Isaias exclaims: "Woe to you that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Is. 5, 20).

Secondly, by praising someone with the intention of injuring him in soul or body. The Pharisees were of this kind. In order to do injury to Christ they pretended that they were well disposed toward Him. "Master," said they, "we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; tell us, therefore, what dost thou think, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" (Matt. 22, 17). Behold the flattery! they praise Him in order to try and ensnare Him in His speech (Matt. 22, 15). If Christ had said that it was not lawful to give tribute to Caesar, they would have denounced Him to the Emperor as one refusing to pay taxes; had He said they must pay the tribute they would have set the populace against Him. The purpose of their flattery was therefore to bring about His discomfiture.

Even in these days there are many Pharisees who know how to give sweet words when they want to get the information or advantage they desire. They never tire of flattery until the other person lets fall in confidence the words they want to hear to bring disfavor upon this same person, to inflict injury upon him.

The most dangerous flatterers are those fiendish persons who in this way approach innocent young persons in order to rob them of their greatest spiritual good. Beware, young maidens, and trust not the flatterer, for he is your most dangerous enemy. Judas kissed the Saviour, and this malicious kiss was the sign of betrayal.

Through flattery also sin those who praise the sins of others and thereby encourage them in their evil ways. Remember, dear brethren, that our God is the God of truth and that He demands truthfulness from those who confess Him. All lying, all hypocrisy, is detested by Him, and the most grievous lies are those that are

uttered with the intent to harm the eternal or temporal welfare of the neighbor, the lies told by tale-bearing and flattery.

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## Rash Judgment

Upon a previous occasion I explained to you that bad thoughts often do more havoc to the soul than evil deeds. The eye of God does not only see that which is material, i. e., our actual deeds, but the Lord, as David says, "beholds the thoughts of men." You will understand, therefore, that we may sin grievously not only by verbally, or in writing, bearing false witness against the neighbor, but also in thought by falsely accusing him of misdeed or harshly condemning him.

Hence, all rash judgment, be it concealed in the heart or uttered by the tongue, is forbidden by the Eighth Commandment.

Not every unfavorable thought about our neighbor is a rash judgment, nor is every unfavorable judgment in our mind a rash one. A judgment is rash when we pass judgment upon our neighbor's qualities or actions without just and reasonable cause.

To rashly judge there is required a definite charge concerning the neighbor. If we only have a suspicion and properly hesitate to form an opinion until we are quite positive, there is no rash judgment on our part. For it is called "judging" when we either to ourselves or to others say he did it, he is guilty. When this positive sentence is lacking, then there is no judgment, but only suspicion, and such suspicion is of itself no sin as long as it remains a suspicion. If for good cause we have a suspicion about a person we do him no wrong, because we do not yet accuse him of it. An example will make this plain. There is lost in a certain house a ring, a coin, a book, or some other article. The loss is noticed by the head of the house who makes inquiries, but cannot find the lost article. Now the question is quite natural: who could possibly have taken it? If there is a person who had access to the room in which the article was kept, suspicion falls upon this person, and it may be thought possible that this person stole it. Mark well, that this is only thought a possibility, equivalent to saying: "It might or might not be the case, that this person has stolen the article." It is a mere suspicion, which is not a sin, because there is left room for doubt. If, how-

ever, the head of the house is not content with mere suspicion, if he without just proof condemns the maid, thinking or saying that she stole it, that she is a thief, and so on, this is no longer mere suspicion, but a rash judgment, because without sufficient cause and proof the servant is accused and condemned of theft. For it does not follow that because she had access to the room where the article was that she really took it. Hence she is wronged by rash judgment, which is a sin in God's sight. In the same way all those sin by rash judgment who by reason of a person's mere exterior form an unfavorable opinion as to his morals or his character, or who upon seeing an action unimportant in itself and not at all bad, form the opinion that the act was done with bad intent, or who ascribe to a good work which they see performed a bad purpose.

Lastly, it is a rash judgment to condemn a whole family because one member does evil, to condemn a religion because one of its members went wrong.

Such judgments are rash, because they are not based on sufficient grounds and are pronounced carelessly.

Rash judgment is injurious to both the accused and the accuser.

There is first the great wrong done to our neighbor. If utterance is given to such rash suspicion, it is often circulated far and wide. It would be bad enough to carry the rash judgment about in our heart: but it is truly diabolical to pass this suspicion to others.

And this is all the more censurable as almost every unfavorable judgment based on suspicion is a false one. We are never so exposed to error, never so easily mistaken, as when we judge others. It is never easier for the evil spirit to do injury than when we let ourselves be misled into judging rashly of our neighbor's intentions.

Dear brethren, you may frequently have harbored groundless suspicion. You may have judged your neighbors, friends and acquaintances hastily, when there was very little reason for it. And you may have made little of uttering such suspicion. Remember that St. Paul says: "Wherefore thou are inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself" (Rom. 2, 1). And Christ says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7, 1).

## False Testimony

The giving of false testimony is among the sins expressly forbidden by the Eighth Commandment, for it says: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

A false witness is one who, to unjustly favor or to injure his neighbor, says something contrary to truth and justice, whether this declaration be made publicly in court, or in confidential conversation with others, whether confirmed by oath, or without oath, verbally or in writing, or in whatsoever manner it may happen.

Hence it follows that this Commandment does more than prohibit false testimony in a court of justice. They sin by giving false testimony, for instance, who hear something evil said about their neighbor, and on their part carry the news to others and relate it as something positive, although as a matter of fact they know not whether such news be true or not. And how often does not this happen? How many there are who, in order to please, or to be interesting, perhaps also from jealousy, put others in a bad light and carry such untrue tales without the slightest hesitation?

How grievous this sin is may be gleaned from the fact that false accusation before the law was considered one of the greatest crimes in the Old Testament. A false witness sins fourfold, namely, against God, against lawful authority, against the accused person, and against the public good.

He sins against God because in making his declaration under oath he calls upon God to witness his lying and his untruth, and that amounts to denying that God is the infallible truth.

The false witness sins against lawful authority because his deception causes it to err in its judgments and to assist in injustice.

The false witness sins against the accused by reason of the injury done to him. For this reason such false witness is bound in conscience to repair all loss caused by his false accusation. We read how vigorously God prescribed this restitution in the Old Testament. "If a lying witness," we read in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 19, 16), "stands against a man, accusing him of transgression, both of them, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord in the sight of the priests and the judges that shall be in those days. And when, after most diligent inquisition, they shall find that the false witness hath told a lie against his brother, they shall render to him as he meant to do

to his brother: and thou shalt take away the evil one out of the midst of thee, that others hearing may fear, and may not dare to do such things. And thou shalt not pity him, but shalt require life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

In the Third Book of Kings is recorded the story of how a man was deprived of his vineyard and even of his life by false witnesses. And God sent a prophet to the king and queen, who were the instigators of this foul deed, and announced to them the severe punishment that would be meted out to them for their sins. The two men, however, who had sworn falsely against the innocent victim, are called in Holy Writ "Sons of Belial, children of the devil, and diabolical men."

Finally, a false witness sins against the common good because he impedes justice, making the guilty appear innocent and the innocent guilty.

Now someone may ask, what is to be said of one who bears false witness unintentionally. A case might occur where a person would testify to his best knowledge and subsequently find that he had been deceived and that his testimony was false. In such case the witness who made a false declaration not in malice, but in ignorance, has not sinned against the Commandment. However, he is in duty bound to retract his testimony, and in case he has injured his neighbor in reputation or property, to make good such damage to the best of his ability. Let this be a warning to you to be most careful in your speech and depositions.

We may give false testimony also out of court and injure our neighbor thereby. By such false testimony we sin against the Eighth Commandment and against charity and justice, and it follows that in either case we are strictly obliged to make restitution.

Every false declaration made knowingly and intentionally in order to harm our neighbor, or to assist others contrary to justice, is a sin against the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." For this reason God curses all false witnesses, without distinction as to those who give testimony in or out of court, and says: "A lying witness shall perish."

Holy Writ admonishes us with earnest words and says: "Make a balance for thy speech, and a bridle for thy tongue and set a bolt at the door of thy mouth."

## Detraction, Calumny

Amongst the offences against the Eighth Commandment must be mentioned also detraction and calumny.

Detraction as the word implies is the act of taking from the honor of the neighbor, causing injury to his good name and reputation. He, therefore, who reveals to others a misdeed of his neighbor, without necessity or sufficient reason, renders himself guilty of detraction, and he sins, even if what he relates is perfectly true. People sometimes come to confession and say that they had spoken badly about their neighbor, but as an excuse they mention that they only said what was true. This is no valid excuse, for the reason that by saying these things you do injury to your neighbor and commit the sin of detraction.

The sin, of course, is far greater when one tells lies and untruths and gives one's neighbor a bad name. And this is called calumny.

Calumny knowingly committed is always a sin, but we do not always sin when we speak of bad actions of others. Anything, for instance, that is a well-known misdeed, of this we may lawfully speak. A person may also complain of one who has done him an injury or wrong: may even go to law about it, or refer the matter to others for their advice. We may and even must speak of the misdeeds of others if we can thereby prevent evil consequences, or if our warning is required to protect others against these misdeeds.

On the other hand, they sin against the Eighth Commandment who unnecessarily reveal misdeeds of their neighbor and thereby hurt his good name or reputation.

Those who knowingly say something untrue about their neighbor sin grievously, because this is calumny, or slander.

We sin even by listening to detraction and calumny. This may take place by inducing someone to discover the faults of others, or by willingly listening to calumniators. Both is contrary to Christian charity. The slanderer is thus encouraged to continue his sinful gossip. It is the duty of the Christian to censure slanderous discourse, if not with severity, yet at least by showing displeasure, and this will usually shame the slanderer into silence and turn the conversation into other channels. This was often done by pious Thomas More, the saintly Chancellor of England. When slanderous conversations were carried on, he began to speak of

other topics, making it plain how distasteful such talk was to his ears.

Calumny is a sin against charity and against justice. The law of charity says: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Consequently, thou shouldst not do unto others what thou wouldst not have done to thyself. Certainly we should not like to have our own faults made the subject of conversation, and we sin against charity when we treat others in this way.

The law of justice prescribes: Thou shalt not unwarrantedly injure thy neighbor. The calumniator, however, does truly injure his neighbor. He robs him of the best he has, his good name, his honor, his reputation. This is very sinful, for "A good name is better than great riches," says Holy Scripture. For this reason the Apostle says that the calumniator is detested by men and punished by God. And the Holy Ghost tells us that such sinners will, like thieves and murderers, hear one day the sentence: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

Why calumny is so detestable is best realized when its consequences are considered.

The Holy Fathers, in speaking of the consequences of calumny, make use of various parables. They compare it to a poisoned arrow, to a two-edged sword, to a serpent hiding in ambush and poisoning by its bite. Tell me, my dear brethren, is there anything dearer to you than your good name, the good name of those for whom you care? Is it not a dastardly thing, then, to wantonly destroy a good name? Is it not actually a crime to sow discord in families, or even between husband and wife? Is it not a base and mean act to seek unfair advantage over someone by blackening his reputation? No need to dwell further upon the viciousness of slander and calumny.

The Holy Spirit warns in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Take heed lest thou slip with the tongue and thy fall be incurable unto death" (i. e., the wounds of the soul) (Eccles. 28, 39). Blaspheming, cursing, perjury, are such great falls of the tongue—but the wounds of these falls may be healed, whereas the word that assails our neighbor's reputation causes a wound which is all too often incurable.

## Restoring the Injured Reputation

Calumny is of itself a great sin. It can be forgiven by contrition and confession, but the law requires restitution for the damage inflicted, and that is in this case the retraction of the slanderous talk.

This restitution is most difficult, you will think, and you are right. And because it is difficult but few undertake it, and this is the reason why, as the Holy Spirit says, the fall of those who sin against their neighbor, by bearing false witness, by rash judgments and malicious gossip, is almost incurable.

We see how strictly on the one hand the restoration of the neighbor's good name is required, and how, on the other hand, this restitution is so hard of accomplishment.

It is here a question of stolen property, namely, the stolen reputation, and until the property stolen is restored the sin will not be forgiven. On this account St. Vincent says, "as a thief is obliged to make restitution, so is the person who from malice robs his neighbor of honor and good name to make restitution, even if what he has said be true, otherwise he cannot be saved."

To this restitution are obliged all those who, by concealing the truth, or by imputing a false charge, lessen their neighbor's good character; the gossips who report the sayings and doings of their fellowmen to others with the bad intent of arousing ill will and enmity; those also who by testifying falsely in or out of court injure their neighbor's good name, and all those who by calumny deprive their neighbor of his honor as well as people who gladly listen to such slanderous tale.

The slanderer does not even satisfy this obligation by simply retracting the calumny. No, he has to make good all damage he has inflicted by his misdeed.

The restoring of stolen property may be accomplished through the Confessor, or in some other secret way. The calumniator, however, who has robbed the neighbor of his honor, must make restitution himself, in his own person; he must therefore degrade himself, proclaim his own words to be lies, and admit himself to be a perverter of the truth. This calls for a courage met with in extremely few persons.

And yet it must be done, otherwise the fall is incurable and the

soul must perish. For it is certain that you, who have robbed your neighbor of his good name by testifying falsely, you must retract your words before those who heard you and confess that you wronged this or that person, that your accusations were based upon a false idea or cruel suspicion or hearsay, and that you unjustly attacked your neighbor's good name. Now, if you do this and retract your word what does it mean? It means as much as to say, I have lied. This is hard, and just for this reason this sin of the tongue is almost incurable, and only amended with difficulty.

And no excuse is valid. One says: "I only spoke the truth." It may be; but you should not have communicated it to others to your neighbor's injury, and for this reason you must make good the harm done.

"I had no bad intent, still less did I wish to harm anyone." But the harm has been done and you must make amends.

"But the person of whom I spoke was dead"—so much the worse, for the dead cannot defend themselves.

If those who heard your slander are no longer around, and you cannot possibly retract in their presence, this, of course, would excuse you.

Others say, "I should not be believed if I did retract"—make your retraction nevertheless, then you have done your part.

"I can not retract because I spoke the truth"—of course, you are not expected to lie, but you can truthfully say that you injured your neighbor when you made known his faults; for in truth you did harm him, and therefore you can sympathize with him, praise his good points and make amends in this manner for the injury done him by your gossip.

Avoid all these humiliating conditions by bridling your tongue, never opening your lips to talk until you have well considered the words that you wish to utter.

## The Commandments of the Church

Besides the ten Commandments of God, there are the Commandments given by the Church. As the by-laws of a society are intended to regulate its operations so that the aims of the society may be attained, so are the Commandments of the Church given to regulate in practice some of the most important requirements of our Religion. Now the question may be asked: Has the Church the right to give such commands, and to this question we shall to-day devote our attention.

We know that Christ said to Peter: "To thee will I give the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosened also in Heaven" (Matt. xvi, 19). Christ spoke these words when He made Peter the head of the Church, so that this authority would be vested in him, and in all his lawful successors unto the end of the world. To him Christ said: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," i. e., rule, guide, enlighten all those who believe in Me, and who would live in the sheepfold of the Catholic Church. This power to rule, to guide and to educate all Catholics was not to cease with the death of Peter, but was to be transmitted to all the successors of Peter. And Christ said: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." He even said: "Whoso will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican" (Matt. xviii, 17). Can there be any doubt therefore that the Commandments of the Church are just as binding upon us as the Commandments of God?

As the child must obey his father's orders, as the citizen must heed the laws of the State, as the servant must carry out the master's will: if, as Paul says, it is even necessary to salvation that everyone be subject to the authorities; then there cannot be a doubt about our obligation of conscientiously obeying the Commandments of our holy Mother, the Church.

The Catholic Church is truly a mother, and she shows herself to be a faithful, loving mother by instructing us in the true faith, and teaching us all things that we should know to gain our salvation, and by bringing us up in the true faith, and training us to arrange our lives according to its tenets. The Church orders nothing con-

trary to the faith and to the doctrine which Christ deposited with her as a sacred possession. For she has with her the Holy Spirit, who leads and guides her and does not permit her to err. Hence it is self-evident that she cannot allow her children the freedom to act as best pleases them, but she must require them to practise their belief and to live according to their faith.

For this purpose she has prescribed six Commandments, the first of which is to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. This Commandment puts into practice the Third Commandment of God: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day." God instituted in the Old Testament a weekly day of rest, but beside this weekly Sabbath certain festivals were introduced at God's behest, and so the Church, in the New Law, by virtue of her authority, has instituted other festivals besides the weekly Sunday. Of the feasts not celebrated on a Sunday there are now only six of obligation, and on these feasts we are obliged under pain of sin to hear Mass, unless lawfully excused. These feasts of obligation are: Christmas, The Circumcision of Our Lord or New Year's, The Ascension, The Assumption, All Saints', and The Immaculate Conception.

That the command of the Church to hear Mass on the appointed days is most reasonable and necessary needs no further explanation if it be remembered that once people get careless in going to church they are generally on the way of losing their faith. Attendance at the holy service is the foundation of a devout life and therefore indispensable for the Christian.

The Second Commandment requires us to fast and abstain on the days appointed. This Commandment is not agreeable to many Catholics. Where is it written, they ask, that upon certain days we should eat no meat? And they point out that Christ says: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man" (Matt. xv, 11). These people may easily be silenced by asking them about the forbidden fruit that Adam ate. Did it not defile him, since God had forbidden him to taste of this fruit? Therefore, although meat may not of itself defile the one eating it, yet he sins by tasting the same on forbidden days, because he transgresses the command of the Church, which has received from God authority to command or to forbid things as she considers them wholesome or injurious to the salvation of the souls confided to her care.

The Third Commandment bids us to confess at least once a year, and the Fourth obliges us to receive the Holy Eucharist during the

Easter time. Thereby the Church makes Easter Confession and Communion of obligation, compelling men to attend to these sacred duties for their spiritual welfare.

The Fifth Commandment requires us to contribute to the support of our pastors. This needs no explanation.

The Sixth and last Commandment regulates matters of marriage. The family is an institution in a particular manner sanctified by Christ. In order to make family life productive of the greatest spiritual as well as material good the Church has made wise regulations for the marriage of her children. We shall consider in a special instruction the benefits resulting from a faithful observance of her laws in these matters.

## Holy Mass a Treasure

In further considering the First Commandment of the Church it is to be noted that there is no other difference between the Third Commandment of God and the First Commandment of the Church except that the Church, inspired by the Holy Ghost and following Apostolic tradition, orders the Sunday to be observed instead of the Sabbath, and also orders the observance of some feasts.

Since we can show God no greater honor, nor serve Him more agreeably than by offering the sublime sacrifice of Holy Mass, the Church, for the purpose of making obligatory especially the worthy celebration of the Sunday, commands that Catholics under pain of grievous sin must assist at Holy Mass upon the days of obligation.

God has always been well pleased with sacrifice. Cain and Abel offered sacrifice to God, because doubtless they had seen their parents do so. We may reasonably suppose that God Himself, as the teacher of our first parents in all things, instructed them to honor Him by sacrifice. Later He ordained explicitly the various sacrifices that should be offered Him. But the sacrifices of the Old Law as compared to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass were but as a shadow compared to reality.

Holy Mass is the true burnt offering whereby is offered to the Most High that honor which is due Him. By no sacrifice is God more glorified than by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which the Saviour has left with His Church in order to offer to the Father a most perfect honor. In Holy Mass God is honored by God, by the Divine Person Jesus Christ. Christ there lays Himself down upon the Altar as the sacrificial victim, and through His act of abasement glorifies the most Holy Trinity in as perfect a manner as it can ever be glorified. This is an act of adoration for God, before which all the sacrifices of praise of mankind vanish, as do the stars before the sunlight. A single Mass honors God infinitely more than the praise of all the Angels and Saints in Heaven. And by assisting at Holy Mass we offer God, through Christ our Lord, an infinite honor, an infinite homage.

Holy Mass is, furthermore, the best thank offering for blessings received. Untold blessings has God shown you, blessings for body and soul, life, good health, sound senses and straight limbs, raiment

and food, good parents and a Christian up-bringing, the gift of faith, and many opportunities for good, rescues from spiritual perils, and frequent forgiveness of sins. Realizing the innumerable benefits of God and our own unworthiness, an oppressive feeling is upon us, and seeing that we are poorer before God than the most poverty-stricken beggar in our midst, in shame we cover our face, crying out with David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. cxv, 12). The holy Sacrifice of the Mass was therefore specially instituted for our grateful acknowledgment of the blessings received from God, and for this reason it is called in particular the Eucharist, which means thanksgiving. Christ Himself taught us this by His example, when, at the celebration of the first Mass on Maunday Thursday, He lifted up His eyes to Heaven and gave thanks to His Heavenly Father.

Holy Mass is also the most potent sacrifice of petition. Each one of you knows from his own experience the many needs of mankind. We retire at night with a heart full of cares; and so do we arise in the morning conscious of many needs. See, however, all the graces which we require, be they for soul or body, we may purchase in the most effective way through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Christ Himself gave us assurance that whenever we should ask for a grace in His Name, we should attain it. "Amen, Amen I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you" (John xvi, 23). In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we not only ask in the name of Jesus, but Christ Himself asks for us, and He Himself presents our petition to the heavenly Father. With confidence may we therefore offer in holy Mass our necessities, our needs, our wants, and Jesus Himself takes care of them upon the Altar. "He that spared not even His Own Son," says St. Paul, "but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things."

Holy Mass is the spiritual sun of the human race, which pours its rays on good and bad, and there is probably no human soul on God's earth so depraved who could not from hearing holy Mass derive profit and grace. Indeed, history records many conversions wrought by the devout attendance at Mass.

Holy Mass is, again, a sacrifice of atonement that has the power to appease God, to bring about the remission of our guilt and punishment, and the remission of the temporary punishment of the holy Souls in Purgatory. For in the holy Mass the innocent Lamb

of God is sacrificed, who takes away the sins of the world, whose Blood cries to Heaven—not for vengeance, as did Abel's blood, but for grace and pardon. It is the opinion of theologians that holy Mass effaces venial sins in the one who attends the Mass and who repents, at least in general, of all his sins. St. Augustine says this distinctly: "If anyone hears Mass with devotion, he will not fall into mortal sin, and his venial sins will be remitted." To this end the priest offers up for himself and for those around him, the Host, to the Lord God, saying: "Accept, O Holy Father, Almighty eternal God, this spotless Host, which I, thy unworthy servant, offer to Thee."

Theologians say, furthermore, that through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass we can make satisfaction even for mortal sins already remitted, especially for those that have escaped our memory, and which for this reason we have never confessed. Holy Mass may be the means of leading us to pardon for sin, because through the Mass we may merit with God the grace to rightly perceive our sins, to repent, confess and do penance for them. The Council of Trent states this in the words: "Appeased through the offering up of this sacrifice, God grants the grace of repentance, and by means of this penance remits even crimes and monstrous sins" (Less. 22, c. 2). God alone knows the number of the souls who, through the extraordinary graces that flowed to them through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, have worked their way out of long servitude of sin to a holy life.

The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is of such supreme benefit that we may thereby attain the remission of punishment due to sin. In truth, if holy Mass were not our shield, what might restrain the wrath of God? "Cursing and lying, murder and robbery, impurity and adultery are prevalent," laments the Prophet Osee. Is it any better in these days of ours? And yet the good Lord looks on patiently. He allows the sun to rise, and gives rain and increase to the fruits of the earth. He looks on patiently, observes St. Gregory, because for the sins of men there is, not merely daily, but hourly, and from every quarter of the globe, offered to Him a sacrifice, not of beasts and inanimate creatures, but of the true Flesh and true Blood of Jesus, His only begotten Son, the Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world..

From what I have said you may understand how valuable is the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and how absolutely necessary it is for

our salvation. Therefore, even if no commandment of the Church would demand it, we should have to consider as very lukewarm any Catholic who, having the opportunity to hear a holy Mass, would neglect to do so.

Far from criticising, therefore, the Commandment of the Church, who as our Mother cares for the salvation of her children, we ought to give thanks that every Catholic is obliged to attend at Mass at least on Sundays and holydays, because this act of worship is without doubt absolutely indispensable for the Catholic in working out the salvation of his soul.

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## Holy Mass Must Be Heard With Devotion

In the parable of the wedding feast Christ reproached the Jews for their obstinacy, they would not believe His words, not accept His doctrine, not give heed to His call, but would perish rather than appear at the banquet of eternal life.

Dear brethren, does not this parable apply also to many Christians? A precious banquet is prepared by Christ daily in His house. In every church there comes daily the priest, he sets bread and wine upon the table and changes it into the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ, and, after himself partaking of it, he invites the faithful to come and share in this heavenly banquet, share in the spiritual fruits which the Holy Mass bestows upon all who assist at it with devotion.

But for many the call is in vain, they will not come, they neglect the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and go about their business. I do not exaggerate if I say that many would not come to church even once in a whole year, to assist at that sacred banquet, if the Church did not oblige them under pain of mortal sin to hear Mass at least on Sundays and holydays.

It is of obligation, furthermore, to hear a whole Mass, from beginning to end, without omitting any important part. He who of his own fault misses one of the chief parts of the Mass, such as the Offertory, the Consecration, or the Communion, that person has not complied with the Commandment of the Church. Examine yourselves on this point, and if you find that by arriving late you have neglected a chief part of the holy Mass, then rest assured you

have offended against the Commandment of the Church, unless you are validly excused.

The Church requires us not merely to assist at holy Mass, but to do so with devotion. That means to hear Mass with a recollected spirit, with a good intention, and with becoming demeanor.

On this account, before all things, we must have the necessary intention to hear Mass and to participate in its fruits. The best intention is to hear and offer up holy Mass as the Church wills that we hear it, and as the priest himself offers the sacrifice, namely to glorify and praise God, to thank Him for all the benefits bestowed upon us from our first breath to the present moment, to propitiate God through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and to make satisfaction for our own as well as for the sins of others, for the living and the dead; and, finally, to ask God for the graces necessary for the salvation of our souls, and to commend to Him the needs of all Christendom.

In order to fulfil the Commandment of the Church, you must be attentive at least at the chief parts of the holy Mass, at the offering of the bread and wine, at the consecration, and at the priest's communion. Heart and mind must be centered upon the holy Sacrifice, you must not let your thoughts wander, but keep them concentrated upon the significance of the priestly actions.

Consequently they do not satisfy the Commandment of the Church who, during Mass, abandon themselves to voluntary distractions. It is different if such distractions come unbidden and we discard them as soon as we become aware of them. To struggle against them is of great merit and pleasing to God.

Finally, they do not fulfil the Commandment of the Church who talk and laugh during holy Mass, who look at others in order to satisfy their curiosity, etc. Such persons commit the additional sin of disrespect towards God.

The story is told of an aged peasant woman who, in order to obtain a special favor from God, made a promise to hear a certain number of Masses during the year. She kept her promise and attended Mass every day, rain or shine. On returning home she was wont to put a bean in a little bag, so as to keep count of the Masses heard. When she thought she had heard the promised number of Masses she opened the bag, but—oh, horror, of the many beans she had placed within it, but a single one was there. She was much alarmed at this, and confided the matter to a priest, who put

a few questions to her, as to what she had done on the way to church, and with what devotion she had assisted at the Masses. It was discovered that on the way to church she had gossipped with others about the faults of neighbors, whilst during Mass she had hardly ever thought of divine things. The priest then said to her: Do you see the reason why all these Masses were lost to you? Your gossip, your curiosity, your voluntary distractions, have robbed you of your merits. Meanwhile thank God that at least one Mass heard has been profitable to you.

You see, dear brethren, what is required. Bodily presence at the holy Mass on Sundays and holydays does not suffice. You must also assist with a devout and recollected spirit. Without this devotion the Mass is lost to you, and you have not met your obligation. I wish you would ask yourself how many Masses you have really heard before God? Your conscience will answer you, and perhaps in your next confession you may have something to say that hitherto you have never thought of mentioning.

## Proper Behavior At Holy Mass

A certain saint while attending holy Mass had a remarkable vision. He beheld in the church a tree spreading its branches throughout the holy place. From the branches of the tree lovely flowers fell down upon those present, but in a peculiar manner. Some of the flowers dropped beside worshippers upon the ground; some fell upon the heads of others, but immediately faded; while other flowers rested upon the heads of worshippers and retained all their beauty and freshness. This tree was a symbol of the blessings that during the Saviour's unbloody Sacrifice in holy Mass are abundantly poured out upon mankind, when the Divine gifts of Grace drop down like magnificent flowers. In the instance of indifferent persons they fall unavailing to the ground; lukewarm worshippers receive them, but let them wither without making use of them; while they stay with, and adorn, God-fearing souls.

How should we behave ourselves at holy Mass to partake of its blessings?

I know not whether you have ever read in Holy Scripture about the marvelous stillness that reigned in Solomon's magnificent Temple when the Sacrifice was offered. Not the slightest sound could be heard, although numerous priests of sacrifice and an immense multitude of people were present.

If in this Temple then, at a sacrifice which was a mere shadow of our holy Sacrifice, such decorum was manifest, then I ask what holy awe and reverence should not reign at holy Mass, in which the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ Himself, is offered up?

Yes, holy silence is the first essential that should prevail throughout the church during the holy Sacrifice. Not without meaning was there profound silence in the first little church in which the Lamb of God appeared, in the stable of Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the Magi, filled with a holy awe before the Majesty of God, sank upon their knees and adored the Lord God in the silence of their hearts. This example has always been followed by devout Christians. When the early Christians assembled for the celebration of holy Mass, there was not even a whisper to disturb the holy silence, unless they raised their voices in devout prayer and song.

And in these days the very same holy Sacrifice is offered up, heaven is opened, Christ sits upon the throne and the place is filled with invisible holy spirits. For this reason a holy silence should be observed by the faithful. After the gospel has been read and the first chief part of the holy Mass begins, the Offertory, and we should be mindful that now begins the solemn offering of the Most Holy Sacrifice. Then at the Sanctus, as the moment of consecration approaches, the bell rings again and calls for devotion. When then the supreme moment comes, in which Jesus Christ appears upon the Altar, again the bell rings to enjoin silence and reverence at this sublime action. In that moment we should behave as we would if we were standing before the Divine Majesty, in heaven, where as St. John said: "There was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour" (Apoc. viii, 1).

Anyone who realizes the sublimity of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass will surely conduct himself becomingly throughout the entire holy action. The presence of Jesus Christ who reposes on the Altar, only a few feet away from us, makes it sufficiently plain what our attitude should be.

Hence the arrival of Jesus Christ in holy Mass should find us kneeling and in earnest and sincere devotion, folding our hands and lowering our eyes reverently. We know that our Lord prayed on bended knees: so did St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Stephen, and the first Christians remained on their knees throughout the entire Mass.

Let this be a warning to you, dear brethren, to conduct yourselves modestly and reverently at holy Mass, so that the attendance at holy Mass may be full of grace and blessing for you. And one of the means to accomplish this is proper recollection on the way to church.

You have seen on public highways sign-posts with inscriptions directing the wayfarer to the various places reached by that road. Whenever you go to church imagine that there are three such sign-posts on your way, and the first of these has the inscription: Whither goest thou? To church, you say to yourself, to the house of prayer, not to a house of gossip or amusement. Having the answer to this question fixed in your mind, imagine a second sign-post with the inscription: To whom goest thou? You answer: I go now to God, to the most exalted Divine Majesty, before whose countenance even the angels tremble, before whom

the whole world is as inconsiderable as a drop of water in a bucket (Is. xl, 15). I am going to God, who lovingly invites me to enter into His house, more lovingly than the best of fathers would receive his cherished child. Then imagine that there is a third sign-post before you with the inscription: And why goest thou? And your reply is: In order to hear holy Mass, to assist at the greatest of all sacrifices, in order to show that I am a Catholic; in order to worship God, to extol and to praise Him, to be reconciled to Him, to thank Him for benefits shown, to beg His assistance and help, because I am a sinner who is in need of the mercy of God. He who remembers on the way to church these three things, and ponders over these questions, will during holy Mass not fail to spend his time in rapt devotion and attention, and it will not be said of him what St. Ambrose said of certain persons: "They come to church with small sins, and leave it with many and great sins." Amen.

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## Holy Mass The True Sacrifice

The fact that the Incarnate God and eternal high priest Jesus Christ, after having become our Sacrifice of atonement, offers Himself up daily to God for the human race, is the most sublime of Mysteries, the great act of worship of our holy religion. Through this most holy Sacrifice the chains of slavery of sin are broken, man is reconciled with God, united to Him in grace, and again given the title to eternal blessedness.

Like the ancient sacrifices, so does the Sacrifice of the New Law require participation on part of the faithful, and as this is the sacrifice of all times, of all places, and of all mankind, participation in the same must be made possible for all members of the human race unto the end of the world. God's infinite love has found a means to continue the Sacrifice of the Cross unto the end of the world, by renewing it daily upon our altars, and He lets us share in it by giving us under the form of bread and of wine the Body and Blood of our Infinite Victim. Thus man enters into communion with God no longer in a symbolical way but in a true, real and substantial manner, and thus is restored that perfect union between God and man which had been severed by sin.

The perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross, by means of which we share in the exalted sacrifice of Calvary, is the Sacrifice of our altars, holy Mass.

Holy Mass is the true and real sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, daily offered upon our altars under the outward forms of bread and wine. The same Jesus Christ who Himself offered the sacrifice upon the Cross of Calvary, offers Himself up now through the priest at holy Mass. There is between the two sacrifices no other difference than the manner of offering. The sacrifice of the Cross was accomplished by the real shedding of the Blood of our Lord, and hence it is called a bloody sacrifice, while the sacrifice of our altars, on the other hand, is not attended by the shedding of blood, but is performed in a mystical, spiritual way.

Holy Mass is a true and real sacrifice, because all the essentials that belong to a sacrifice are present. There is, in the first place, the matter of the offering, which is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, a true and real sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ Himself. The priest at the altar only represents the Person of Jesus Christ, who is really the offerer and speaks through the mouth of the priest. The priest at the consecration does not say: This is the Body, this is the Blood, of Christ, but he says, in the Person of the Incarnate God: "This is *my* Body, this is *my* Blood."

Further, besides the offering there is also the immolation of the sacrifice, though it is a mystical and symbolical one. By virtue of the consecration Jesus Christ offers His Body under the form of bread, and His Blood under the form of wine, although through the inseparable union of His Body and Blood, Jesus Christ is wholly and really present under each of the two forms. Priest and Sacrifice are therefore the same in this as in the Sacrifice of the Cross. Holy Mass is therefore the clean oblation of which God foretold, through the Prophet Malachias, that it should be offered to His name in all places.

If then the Sacrifice of Holy Mass is the true renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, what more can be requisite to move you to a profound reverence for the same? When you assist at holy Mass you are, as it were, ascending Mount Calvary to be spectators and eyewitnesses of the death of Christ, and the eye of faith will show you our Lord in His suffering for His love of us. With such sentiments should we appear before the altar, if we

wish to show our gratitude to God for the gift which He has made us in this priceless sacrifice; then we shall reap from holy Mass abundant fruits for our sanctification and salvation.

There are in particular four chief fruits of this Divine Sacrifice, corresponding to the four ends for which we should offer it up.

Firstly, we should offer to God the adoration and homage which is His due. This adoration must be an infinite one. But how is man, as an imperfect creature, capable of offering to God an infinite honor? A sacrificial gift worthy of God can only be God Himself, if the homage is to correspond to the immensity of His Majesty. This is actually the fact in holy Mass, in which God is worshipped by the Divine Victim, Jesus Christ, who places Himself in the priest's hands to be offered as sacrifice. This truly is an infinite worship offered to the Divine Majesty.

Our second duty towards God is to conciliate Him, and to offer Him a befitting satisfaction for our sins. But to make befitting satisfaction is impossible to man alone. There is required a Divine Mediator, the eternal, incarnate Word of God. He it is indeed who became our expiatory sacrifice, who acquired for us mercy and grace and rendered for us a complete satisfaction through the bloody sacrifice of the Cross, and still renders the same perpetually through the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass. And what would become of the world, which even after the death of Jesus Christ continued to sin, if there were no sacrifice in the Church to propitiate the wrath ever kindled afresh in the Heart of God? It would very likely have perished under the weight of its misdeeds. It is the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass which preserves it and restrains the hand of Divine Justice.

The third of our duties toward God is to return to Him thanks for His infinite blessings. But of what value can our own feeble thanksgivings be in comparison to the blessings we receive from God? Thanks to the sublime Sacrifice of the Holy Mass we may now confidently appear before the face of the eternal Father, and say: "Father, we acknowledge Thy mercy and our unworthiness. Here we have a gift which is equal to Thee, our Lord Jesus Christ, who offers Himself up through our hands in order to return thanks to Thy Divine goodness."

Our fourth duty towards God is to pray to Him. Through

our prayers we bear witness that He is the sole Author of all good, and that we must expect all things from His hands. Yet of what value can be the prayers of poor sinners such as we are? Praised forever be our Divine Saviour, who has vouchsafed to leave with His holy Church a sacrifice of infinite worth through whose mediation just and sinner alike may raise their supplication to the throne of God with the certainty of being heard. When assisting at holy Mass, we may with confidence ask of God all graces, because then Jesus is Himself our intercessor. He infallibly obtains everything that He asks for us.

How ardently should we thank, therefore, our Heavenly Father, that He has given us the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, through which we can fulfil all our obligations towards Him, and enrich ourselves with infinite graces. Let us therefore assist at this sublime and precious Sacrifice with most lively devotion so that we may participate in the infinite treasures it contains, which are abundantly poured out upon those who frequently, and with the proper disposition, assist at this holy Sacrifice, and be faithful to the command of the Church which requires us to be present at it at least on all Sundays and Holidays of obligation. Amen.

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## Daily Mass

When St. Monica on her deathbed spoke her last words to her son, St. Augustine, they were the expression of her wish that her son should never forget her in offering the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This was a matter that concerned her more than the disposition of her possessions, or other affairs of this world.

My dear brethren, what intelligent Catholic would not have a similar desire on passing into the other world? Those who have stood at deathbeds know how the dying lips have murmured as last request the petition: do not forget me at holy Mass. And if the dying souls did not before death make this request, in the purifying fires of Purgatory they have no dearer wish than that you should remember them in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Yes, indeed, this is now the cry, the desire of the poor souls. They know now that nothing can temper the fire, in which they are purified, like the Blood of Christ in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

They lift up their hands, therefore, and cry to us from the depth of their anguish: "Brethren, brethren, remember us at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass." And should not this fact remind us forcibly of the opportunity which is offered to us in life to profit by this sublime means of grace? Oh, let these supplications of the poor souls be a warning to you to avail yourselves of this opportunity while there is time. And yet, how indifferent are many Catholics in regard to attending Mass! How trifling and unreal are the excuses offered for not hearing Mass!

There is the usual excuse that the Church only commands the hearing of holy Mass on Sundays and holy days; that the Church does not require you to hear Mass on week days. This is usually the first answer so many give to the question why they do not hear holy Mass on week days. Of course where there is a reasonable cause for non-attendance, no fault can be found, but I think that many remain away from Mass who might very well, even without discomfort, attend on week days.

If we do for God only that which we are bound to do under pain of sin: how can we expect from God any but the most necessary graces? God is not obliged to let you exist, to keep you in good health, and yet you look to Him to do so daily. You, on your part, should therefore do for God things which you are not bound to do.

Another excuse is: "Hearing Mass does not give us bread to eat, and my work must be first considered." This is fine talk for a Christian. Does not man consist of body and soul? And does not Christ plainly say that man does not live from bread alone? And when you say the Our Father, do you know what you are asking for by saying "Give us this day our daily bread?" It means not alone give us food, drink, clothing and shelter, but also the food of the soul, the necessary graces, so that we may attain everlasting life. You are not expected to suffer temporal disadvantage by doing good works which are not actually required, but many might with very little inconvenience arrange their time so that they might hear at least now and then a holy Mass on week days without interfering with their work. It will surely bring additional blessings upon your work, for we are told: "Seek ye, therefore, first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Even very busy persons find time every day for doing some

things for recreation, and if the good will is there to go to Mass time for it will probably be found. We read in the lives of saintly men and women of lowly position in life, how in spite of arduous work they found time for daily attendance at holy Mass. But we do not have to look in books for such examples. If on any week day morning you will go to Mass you will find there people who are no less busy than you are. It is probably true of many of you that with a little effort and, maybe, with the sacrifice of some personal comfort, they could often attend at Mass on week days. And be assured that this effort, this sacrifice, will yield you rich reward for body and soul, and let me once more remind you of the poor souls who cry out a warning to you not to miss the opportunity which you now have. Amen.

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## Excuses From The Obligation of Hearing Holy Mass

Truly our Mother the Church is holy. Her Divine head is holy, as are many millions of her members, and her purpose is as holy as the will of God is holy. As the Apostle states it: "This is the will of God, your sanctification," and most ardently does the Church wish that all her children should be holy. And as she knows that we frequently offend God and do but little good, and as in holy Mass the inexhaustible treasury of grace is thrown open, she desires that we at least on Sundays and Holidays make an effort to propitiate God through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and take home with us grace sanctifying our souls. Holy Mass was the hearth at which the Saints kindled the flames of their zeal for God's glory. Through the holy Sacrifice they rendered satisfaction for their sins. At holy Mass they implored God for the necessary grace.

Alas, there are many Catholics who make little of neglecting holy Mass, to them a trifling cause suffices for staying away from Mass. On the other hand there are also persons who are unnecessarily worried if for some legitimate excuse they must miss Mass. For the benefit of both classes of persons I desire to state which are legitimate excuses for not hearing Mass, and which are not.

There are some legitimate causes that release from the obligation to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holidays. The first is impos-

sibility, the second Christian charity, the third important duties of profession or trade, whose neglect would entail serious loss.

The impossibility may be either physical or moral.

In some instances there is physical impossibility of being present personally at holy Mass, for example in the case of people in prison, of sea-faring men upon their trips, of those who are grievously sick, and other such instances. People who find it thus physically impossible to hear Mass on Sundays and Holidays are excused from doing so as long as the impossibility lasts.

Moral impossibility would be present, for instance, if attendance at Mass would put people in danger of injury to soul or body, or if one could not assist without serious disadvantage. In such cases the Church permits in her motherly love that such people may remain away from holy Mass, in order not to have to suffer positive injury by attending Divine service. They also are excused who live at a great distance from the church; the existence of a storm, and if snow or heavy rain make the roads too difficult to travel one is likewise excused. In this number should be included those of weak health who must be careful not to expose themselves to inclement weather, or to over-exertion.

The second cause excusing from the obligation to hear Mass, is charity. Those who have charge of the sick, or of very young children, who cannot well be left alone, do not commit sin by remaining away from church, provided no one else is there to take their place. To assist our neighbor in his need is a Divine commandment, while to hear Mass on Sundays is a commandment of the Church, and in such case, precedence is due to the commandment of God.

Urgent business matter that cannot suffer delay, or the necessary exercise of one's profession may be lawful causes excusing from attendance at Mass. For this reason are excused physicians in instances when they cannot arrange to hear Mass without injuring by their absence the seriously sick.

For reason of necessity are excused also all others whose work must be done on Sunday if the hearing of Mass is actually impossible to them. A motorman of a trolley car, who, before going to his work, might well hear an early Mass, would of course not be excused on the plea that he has to work on Sundays.

These causes just mentioned excuse from the obligation of

hearing Mass if they are founded upon truth, and not upon imagination.

God will according to His own words probe Jerusalem with a burning torch, and He will consequently examine our excuses to be released from the requirements of His commands.

There are many, for instance, who stay away from Mass on rainy days, when not even a blizzard can keep them at home if they want to go to some amusement. Others again, who really have urgent matters to attend to on Sunday mornings, could easily find time to hear a short Mass.

And how do these people who offer such trifling excuses spend the remainder of the Sunday? Do they devote some time to prayer, or some pious exercise, to show their intention of keeping holy the Lord's day? Do they attend church at least in the afternoon or in the evening? The answer to these questions will prove or disprove their sincerity. Bear in mind the words: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he thereby suffer the loss of his soul?"

One thing only is necessary: "that we be saved." This is our vocation. This cannot be attained without great graces from God, and there is, as I have pointed out to you, no more efficacious means to participate abundantly in these graces than through holy Mass. Holy Mass is the key to the treasury of God's graces.

Make the firm resolution therefore never to miss Mass on Sundays or Holidays, unless absolutely prevented. And resolve, furthermore, that for the benefit of your souls you will endeavor to hear Mass also on week days whenever you can do so. Amen.

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## Fasting

The Spirit of God at whose inspiration our holy Mother the Church has made the hearing of holy Mass, the sanctifying of Sundays and Holidays, a matter of obligation, has also inspired the Church to appoint certain days of fasting and of abstinence from flesh meat. The second commandment of the Church deals with our obligation to fast and to abstain.

Just as Catholics are obliged on every Sunday and Holiday to hear Mass devoutly, so they are obliged to abstain from eating

flesh meat on Fridays and on other appointed days of abstinence, and to observe the days of fast prescribed by the Church.

Let us consider to-day why the Church enjoins fasting upon us and how we ought to fast in order to carry out her wishes.

Of all the Commandments of the Church there is none that arouses so much opposition, even from Catholics, as the commandment to fast.

And yet did not God give even to our first parents a commandment to fast, to abstain from the fruit of one tree? Were not the Jews in the Old Testament commanded to fast rigorously on days of penance and atonement? Do we not read that the Ninevites were bidden to fast in order to avert the wrath of God? Did not Moses fast for forty days and nights upon Mount Sinai, and David observe strict fasts after his fall into sin? Whoever fasted so strictly and so long as John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus Christ? And Christ Himself observed a most rigorous fast for forty days and forty nights. And why did Christ fast? Was it not that His fast might serve as an example for us? You see, then, that fasting is no innovation, but an ancient and holy custom, as old indeed as mankind.

The Church by giving this commandment regulated the practice of fasting. There were heathen peoples who taught that certain food was by nature sinful. This is manifestly contrary to Holy Writ, because St. Paul teaches that no food is by nature sinful, but that all food created by God is good and lawful of itself. For her command to fast and abstain from meat on certain days the Church has various reasons. The first she herself gives in the Preface said in holy Mass during Lent, which says: "that through the fasting of the body vice may be suppressed, the spirit raised up to God, virtue implanted, and the path opened to future reward."

This is the first reason, indeed the real aim and end, that actuates the Church in her command to fast.

Do we not all wish to go to Heaven, dear friends? But just "wishing" will not avail us if we do not tread the path which takes us to Heaven. And there is no other way for sinful man but the path of penance.

Read the lives of the Saints, and you will find that they hewed their path to Heaven by means of austerities. St. Bernard says

that we can escape the snares of temptation only by restraining the flesh through fasting.

You know the story related by the Evangelist St. Mark, that on one occasion the Apostles drove out evil spirits; and one of them would not depart from the man he possessed, until Christ Himself drove him out. The Apostles were astonished and said: "Master, why would not this devil depart at our word?" and Christ returned the significant answer: "This kind of devil cannot be driven out except through prayer and *fasting*." It was the devil of concupiscence. This devil of the flesh can only be driven forth by prayer and fasting.

The first object of the Church in commanding us to fast is therefore to weaken the assaults of the flesh and to exterminate vice.

The second object is the imitation of Christ. Our Lord Jesus said: "He who will serve Me, must come and follow Me." And "He who would imitate Me, must take up his cross and follow Me." We, who call ourselves Christians, must imitate Christ. Our first parent Adam through his sin plunged mankind into eternal ruin; in order to rescue us, Christ, the second Adam, fasted forty days and nights, not touching food or drink. Is it then asking much to oblige us now and then to curb our palate for the love of our Redeemer and in order to imitate Him?

The third object of fasting is specified by the Council of Trent: "The whole life of the Christian should be a perpetual penance." (Sess. 14, art. *de Extrema Unct.*) Truly a severe word, more severe than fasting itself. And yet it is true. "The whole life of a Christian should be a perpetual penance," because the penitential life is necessary to us. We are all sinners, our offences against God are infinite, they are greater than we can possibly imagine. If we truly repent of our sins, He mercifully remits our guilt together with the eternal punishment we may have merited; but His justice requires of us at least that satisfaction which we are able to give Him. Because we have sinned so grievously that we can never render perfect satisfaction, and because we still sin daily, thus our penance should be daily, *i. e.*, perpetual. With this intention holy Mother the Church has set apart certain penitential days, called fast days, so that from time to time we may be reminded to do penance. It is better for us to do penance in this life than in purgatory.

Fasting may be of obligation or voluntary. The fast before holy Communion is for instance of obligation, and from the previous midnight until the moment we receive we must not take either food or drink.

One may voluntarily restrict himself in food and drink, for the sake of moderation or for love of virtue, etc.; this is a voluntary and not a fast of obligation.

Fasting means, in the sense of the commandment, the abstaining from food on the days and in the manner prescribed by the Church. This is the ecclesiastical fast to which all Catholics are obliged.

To keep the commandment of the Church, it is required that we fast upon all the appointed days, *i. e.*, the days of Lent, Ember Days, and on the eves of great feasts appointed as fast days.

We must furthermore abstain from flesh meat on fast days as well as on all Fridays. This is the general law of fasting and in force through the whole Catholic Church unless modified by lawful authority. Detailed instruction as to particular kinds of food allowed or forbidden, also the regulation of the meals, are left to the bishop of each diocese who has his instruction read to the faithful usually at the beginning of Lent.

In our next instruction we shall consider the exceptions which the Church allows from the commandment of fasting.

## Exceptions from the Obligation of Fasting

God had no sooner ordered our first parents to abstain from eating the fruit of a certain tree, and thus had given the first commandment to fast, when the evil One was at hand to speak the ominous words: "Why hath God commanded that you should not eat of this tree? What harm can it do to eat of that fruit?" And these words have echoed through the centuries to this very day.

Satan is still asking this question. He does not like to see prayer and fasting. A holy Abbot who was greatly tempted by the devil in his lifetime, said on his deathbed to his monks: "Believe me, dear brethren, the devil fears nothing as much as fasting." Fasting expels the devil from the bodies of those whom he holds closest in his power, namely the impure. Hence he makes strenuous endeavors to prevent men from fasting, and while he no longer speaks through a serpent, he does speak through those of our fellowmen who lend themselves to his service. They will ask you: Why should the Church forbid you to eat meat? All things that God has created are good, says the Apostle Paul (I. Tim., 4-3), and Christ Himself says: Not that which enters into the mouth defileth men, but that which passes the lips. Therefore, whether we eat flesh meat or fish, it is all the same.

Dear brethren, you who have often had occasion to censure Eve for eating the forbidden fruit, do not allow yourselves to be led astray by such talk, do not what she did, do not offend God. The Church does not consider any food, be it fish or flesh, sinful of itself, but she commands us to abstain for the love of God, in order to expiate our sins and to chastise the body. She follows the example that Christ, the Apostles, and the early Christians gave us, in abstaining from eating meat upon certain days, and in restricting ourselves in what we eat. We believe, as Christ said, that no food that enters the mouth of itself defiles man; but we abstain at times from meat because the Church commands us to do so for good and sufficient reasons.

The bread which the prophet ate on his journey was not sinful

of itself, and yet he was torn asunder by a lion, because he had eaten contrary to the commandment (III. Kings, 13, 17, 24).

In the old law pork was as palatable as it is now, and yet the Jews did not eat it, because God had forbidden it, and the Machabee brothers even chose to die rather than eat pork and thus sin against God's commandment (II. Mack, 7, 1-2).

The fruit of the forbidden tree was no doubt good and wholesome, and yet we all must die, because our first parents ate thereof.

Therefore, we Catholics abstain on certain days from eating meat, because the Church orders it, so that we may not sin against God and the law of the Church, although meat is of itself not sinful. You must understand now why we fast, and how wrong they are who make light of the Commandment of the Church to fast. We shall now give our attention to the exceptions which the Church makes in regard to the commandment of fasting, and we shall see how easy it has been made for us.

The Catholic Church is a loving Mother who lends a willing ear to her children's complaints and is mindful of their best interests. For this reason she knows how to discriminate and how to excuse those from the obligation of fasting who are not well able to comply with the command. We are not obliged to fast until we have passed our one and twentieth year; although from the seventh year we must observe abstinence from eating meat whenever this is of obligation. After our twenty-first year the commandment to fast remains in force as long as we are able to fulfil it. The Church has not defined the age at which the obligation to fast shall cease. Those whose strength wanes with advanced years, and who feel themselves enfeebled by fasting, are not longer required to fast. As those under twenty-one years of age are attaining their growth and for this reason need more nourishment, so in old age the bodily strength decreases and more food and drink is needed by the frail body. On this account the Church obliges neither the very young nor the very old to fast.

Those also are exempt from fasting whose health will not permit it. This class includes the sick, the ailing, and those convalescing from an illness, also women in pregnancy, and nursing mothers, likewise those in very poor circumstances who have to eat what comes their way.

Those who do heavy work requiring exertion are not bound

to fast if it interferes with their work. Travelers are excused if they are on a long and tedious journey and subject to considerable fatigue. If the physician considers that the health of a person will not allow of fasting, or of abstaining from meat, the Church does not require the observation of the fast.

In conclusion, you should remember the words of St. Basil, who warns us of measuring the advantage of our fasting only by the abstinence from food; the true fast is to abstain from sin. What will it avail to chastise the body by fasting and on the other hand burden the soul with sins? The mortification of the body has no value in God's sight if the soul does not supply the good intention.

You have heard how you ought to fast in order to satisfy the commandment of the Church, and how easy it is at the present time to fast, when the Church has modified it so much, and how we can keep the command by slight denial. Fasting is made so easy for us that it can hardly be any longer called doing penance. We should therefore be zealous in making up for it by works of piety and of charity, remembering the words of the Lord: "If you do not penance, ye shall perish." Amen.

## The Third and Fourth Commandments of the Church

For a Catholic who has committed a mortal sin the ordinary way to regain the grace necessary for salvation is by means of the Sacrament of Penance. As we all sinned in Adam, the whole human race would have been plunged into everlasting perdition had not God presented us with a means of grace to wipe out original sin in us. This means was in the Old Testament the rite of Circumcision, in the New Law the Sacrament of Baptism. But our weak human nature is inclined to evil more than to good works, and by personal sins after Baptism the soul's welfare is wrecked anew. The good God, who wishes no one to perish, has therefore instituted the Sacrament of Penance by means of which we may and should save ourselves from perdition if we have the misfortune of committing mortal sin.

The early Christians, burning with zeal for their soul's salvation, went to the Lord's Supper at least every Sunday. In those days the Church had no need to prescribe the time for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance and of Holy Eucharist. Only when the zeal of the faithful began to lag did the Church ordain the reception of the holy Sacraments, and first she made it of obligation on part of the faithful to receive these Sacraments at least three times a year, at Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. This command was in practice for eight hundred years.

When it then became evident that tepidity in spiritual things became even more pronounced, the Church commanded every Catholic, under pain of a grievous sin, to confess to an authorized priest and receive Holy Communion at least once a year.

To satisfy this commandment it is required that we confess once a year within the time appointed by the authorities for making the Easter duty, because the Church also commands us to receive at Easter time worthily the Holy Eucharist.

This commandment of the Church to confess one's sins *at least* once a year does not mean *only* once a year. It is the desire of the Church that we should often come to the Holy Table, but for those who disregard her wish and who would likely remain entirely without the Sacraments unless they are compelled to

come, she ordains that at least once a year they *must* receive the Holy Sacraments, in order not to perish utterly.

He who neglects to perform the duty imposed by this command sins grievously towards God, and practically excludes himself from the Church. (*Let here follow an exhortation suited to local conditions.*)

## The Support of the Priest, and of Church and School

Our Redeemer Jesus Christ came into the world to fulfil that which had been foretold by the Prophets. He founded a new Kingdom, proclaimed a New Law, instituted a new Sacrifice, and established a Priesthood with the commission to perpetuate upon earth in His stead the great work founded by Him. Faithful to their commission, our priests open for the people the portals of heaven, they call down the mercy of God upon the world, and restrain the arm of God Almighty's avenging justice. Remove the priest and you take away religion, and with it faith and hope.

Nothing is better calculated to give us an exalted idea of the Catholic Priesthood than the words which Christ addressed to His Apostles, when He invested them with this dignity: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." As God the Father sent His only begotten Divine Son into the world, in order to redeem us, so the Divine Son after fulfilling His mission on earth gave to His Priests the commission of perpetuating the work in His stead. He made them His representatives upon earth, His co-workers in the Salvation of the world, interpreters and heralds of the Divine Will, administrators of mercy, mediators between God and man, dispensers of His graces, and guardians of His Holy Mysteries.

It is not my purpose to-day to dwell exhaustively upon the importance and dignity of the priestly state. I merely referred to them briefly to point out how necessary the institution of the priesthood is in the Church, a fact which must be in evidence to you every day of your lives. It is necessary, therefore, to provide for the maintenance of the priest's person, as well as for the means which enable the priest to exercise properly and successfully the duties of his exalted office; moreover, it is but right and proper on the part of the faithful to provide for these things with a generous spirit and with a liberal hand. It is manifestly improper and even sinful on the part of a Catholic to refuse assuming a proper share of support of priest and church and Catholic school.

In return for the absolutely essential benefits bestowed upon the people by priests, by church and Catholic school, there should

be a cheerful response on the part of the congregation to the call for the necessary funds for their maintenance. It is a fact, which you all may easily verify, that the parish where the temporal needs are liberally provided by the people is usually also in good spiritual condition. And it is well to remember that we live in a world where outside appearances count a great deal with most people. It is not only proper, but of importance and benefit that the prestige of priest and church be duly considered. If your church is unsightly for want of repair, if your pastor is unable to meet necessary and proper expenses for lack of support of his people, these people will find no joy in being members of such a congregation, and the congregation will hardly enjoy the esteem and good-will of its neighbors of other creeds.

The same obligation that requires support of priest and church and school, also prescribes the support of the Church in general. The spiritual welfare of mankind must be attended to by the Church authorities, and the dignified representation of the Church, its government, the missions among the heathen and unbelievers, and many other good works, require the outlay of money, which it is the duty of the faithful to provide according to their means.

Nor is this duty of giving financial support to the Church anything new. We read in the Bible that in the Old Law people were required to give one-tenth of their income to the support of the priests. I think you will agree that those people contributed a considerably larger share of their income than the average Catholic does nowadays. The Church has made no such law, and the generosity of the Church in leaving this matter to her children should be met by generosity on their part in giving support to the institutions of the church. I am afraid that many Catholics have reason to accuse themselves of being niggardly in their contributions to their church, and if the Church, in consequence of such lack of support, suffers and is hindered in doing her mission well and successfully, such Catholics sin against the commandment of the Church, and the money they thus withhold from the Church will bring no blessing. The Pope in governing the universal Church, the Bishop in conducting the affairs of the diocese, the pastor in managing your church and school, are in need of the means to do their work properly, and it is the duty of the faithful to provide these means.

## Keeping the Laws for Matrimony

The Sixth Commandment of the Church concerns matrimony. It forbids the faithful to enter into wedlock at prohibited times. The prohibited times are from the first Sunday of Advent to the Feast of the Epiphany, and from Ash Wednesday to Low Sunday. These days are days of penance, days of mourning, or days of preparation for great festivals. At Christmas we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ in our hearts; Lent is devoted to penance in remembrance of the Passion and death of Our Lord. Hence the Church disapproves of festivities during these times, and also prohibits the festivity of marriage at these times.

Christ Our Lord gave to marriage the dignity of a Sacrament, to sanctify the relation between husband and wife, and to express the important position of marriage and home in the Church. A well-ordered home and family are of the greatest importance to both the temporal and eternal welfare of the faithful. In obedience to the will and the intention of Our Lord, and ever solicitous for the welfare of her children, the Church has surrounded matrimony with safeguards both for the physical and spiritual good of those who are called to this state. These safeguards begin even with betrothal, which in the sense of the Church should be a solemn contract, not to be frivolously entered or dissolved. In all her directions concerning marriage, the Church desires to point to the sacredness as well as to the grave responsibilities of the marriage bond. She desires her children to consider the entering of wedlock with due caution and prudence. Especially is marriage instituted for the propagation of mankind, and for the raising of children in virtue and in fear of the Lord. It is especially to protect the wife and children that the Lord decreed the indissolubility of the marriage bond, and the Church reminds her children of the life-long nature of the bond with a warning to think well before assuming it.

In order to prevent a union of persons which for one reason or other would be improper, the Church has defined certain impediments which either invalidate marriage or at least make it

illegal in the eyes of the Church. Of these impediments I shall treat in detail later on.

The lawful ends of a Christian marriage are three in number: the first is thereby to establish a mutually beneficial partnership between husband and wife, to bear the burdens and cares of life, to console one another in afflictions, thus to attain their last end, which is eternal happiness. The second purpose is to find therein a lawful protection and remedy against incontinence. The third, which is the noblest and most perfect, consists in begetting children, to be regenerated through the grace of Baptism and brought up in righteousness, to serve, to praise, and glorify God in this life and the next.

Every one who thinks of marrying should pray to God for enlightenment and counsel and have as chief aim the true welfare of the soul. Prudent caution should be used in selecting the partner, relying not only on exterior qualities and circumstances, but above all on sound judgment, probity and piety.

Married persons should lead a genuinely Christian life, treat each other kindly and lovingly, bear patiently with each other's failings, care for the best interests of the family, and bring up their children in the practice of virtue. In this way will the sacred bond of marriage be pleasant and its yoke sweet, and not only husband and wife, but also their posterity will be partakers in the exalted good and the precious blessings of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

It behooves you, therefore, dear brethren, to submit faithfully to the ordinances which the Church has wisely decreed in regard to marriage. They place no real hardship upon the faithful, on the contrary, their loyal observance will result in benefit to body and soul, while their neglect is frequently punished even in this life. Amen.

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